

HOW LONG DOES IT TAKE TO BECOME A LAWYER

Steps to becoming a lawyer

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Attorney Frederick Penney discusses what it takes to become a lawyer and the proper steps to get through school quickly and efficiently. Mr. Penney is the managing partner of Penney and Associates injury Attorney's in California.

<https://www.penneylawyers.com/>.

Over 33 years ago Mr. Penney first stepped into law school wondering if this was what he wanted. How did he get there and what did it take to get to

the point of standing in front of the J Reuben Clark Law School doors? Simply stated, Mr. Penney believes it is hard work and perseverance. "Some might believe that it is a person that knows how to argue that needs to become a lawyer, but according to Penney that is not the case. That

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If you want to become a lawyer, you should know that it does not happen overnight.”

Frederick Penney

is not a great trait to becoming a lawyer, a better trait is one that is good at resolving conflicts and is comfortable talking in front of people while being under stress. A lawyer must also have a burning desire to work long hours with high stress. This is the part that many do not understand about becoming a lawyer.”

A career as a lawyer can certainly pay off in the long run.

Those who work in the legal profession are some of the most respected and hardworking people of any career field. Lawyers earn well above average salaries. In 2020, the median annual salary for a lawyer in the U.S. topped \$125,000.

That said, becoming a lawyer is a long process. Earning a law degree requires years of schooling.



Frederick Penney, Managing Attorney, Penney and Associates Injury Lawyers

Reviewing the steps to becoming a lawyer and how much time each step takes.

Step 1 - Earn an undergraduate degree

Time-to-completion: Typically, four years

What is the best undergraduate degree to obtain to get into law school and become a lawyer? There are different options but what Mr. Penney learned early on in his college career is that it does not matter. "This is actually not true as the majority of law schools look at your grades and LSAT (law school admission test) score and from my personal experience I found out that the typical political science undergraduate degree is not as useful for admissions as a more unique bachelor's degree such as math, music, engineering etc." What type of undergraduate degree to get into law school and become a successful law student usually does not matter.



Frederick Penney, Managing Attorney, Penney and Associates

Once the future law student has chosen a field for an undergraduate degree it is important to focus on good grades. It is true that grades from one prestigious university may help more than a university that is not on the radar as an academically notable university, but law school admissions generally still look at the GPA as a very important factor. Mr. Penney experienced this firsthand when he applied to law school. Mr. Penney continues. "Good grades and a good LSAT score are the most important thing for an applicant to get into a prestigious law school."

Step 2 – Take the LSAT

Time-to-completion: Varies; several months to a year

After working on the undergraduate degree, the next step is to take the Law School Admission Test (LSAT). The LSAT is offered multiple times throughout the year. The LSAT covers reading comprehension, logical thinking, and verbal reasoning proficiency. To attend a reputable law school, it is important to score high on the LSAT.

When should the LSAT be taken? Mr. Penney states as follows. "I have found that the best time to take the LSAT is during one's junior year of college. This allows anyone to take the test again if wanting to try to better the score. Most people that I went to law school with took the LSAT their junior year of college."

Prior to taking the LSAT the future law school attendee must figure out how to prepare for this important test. This test is found by many to be difficult, and it is important to figure out how to

prepare for it. There is the self-study or tutoring method to prepare for the LSAT. An organized individual might be able to prepare through a self-study program. However, many find a tutor as the best alternative. A tutor may be available at a local college or can be found online through various organizations. There are official LSAT prep resources on the Law School Admission Council (LSAC) website.

The time it takes to complete the LSAT varies. Some people take it after just a month or two of study. Others study longer and wait to take it until they feel sure about the likelihood of scoring high. Most states including California, allow the potential law student to retake the LSAT if the score is not satisfactory.

Step 3 – Enroll and complete law school

Time-to-completion: Three or Four Years

After the LSAT, the law school application process begins. The actual law school admission process can take around six weeks, but this depends on the school. All American Bar Association accredited law schools require a minimum three years of full-time study to earn a JD. Some law schools offer students part-time status in which they can take courses to earn their degree over the span of four or five years. Law schools are categorized by several associations, including U.S. News and World Reports. <https://www.usnews.com/best-graduate-schools/top-law-schools/law-rankings>.

The application process is daunting. There are several factors to consider when applying. First, a lot is going to depend upon an applicant's grades and LSAT score, there are a number of places on the internet to find the latest statistics including Public Legal.

<https://www.ilrg.com/rankings/law/>. After determining GPA and LSAT score range the best thing that an applicant should do is determine the tuition costs, the availability of scholarships or financial help, the area in the united that's that is desirable to go to school and possibly practice law. When looking at the possibilities of a Law school offering a scholarship make sure that there is a full understanding of what grades must maintain to keep the scholarship.

Step 4 – Passing the bar exam

Time-to-completion: several months

Other than a few rare circumstances, prior to practicing law an individual must pass a state bar exam. The bar exam is the last step in becoming a licensed lawyer. The bar exam is notoriously difficult. The exam is designed to test a lawyer applicant to see if they meet the minimum competency required to practice law in each jurisdiction. It is scored on a pass/fail basis, however in California, an applicant can retake the bar exam an unlimited number of times. All state exam rules are different, and some states make it more difficult to pass than others. Prior to determining what state to take the bar exam it is important to ask a few questions. First, deciding where to practice law? Second, which states reciprocate and allow lawyers with 5 or more years to apply for practicing in that state without having to take the bar exam. Some states

have what is called reciprocity, where after a certain number of years they allow outside lawyers to practice in their state without taking another bar exam. This is very important as it allows an attorney to move to a different state and practice law later in life with very little effort. For example, at the present time California does not allow reciprocity from any other state. Given that, most if not all, states do not allow California lawyers to transfer to their state without that candidate having to take that states bar exam. Therefore, this information is critical if an applicant wants to take the California bar exam. Other states like Utah that allow reciprocity may be more appealing to an applicant that might want to move later in life.

<https://www.jdsupra.com/legalnews/reciprocity-guide-to-states-where-you-7387684/> .

Becoming a lawyer takes time, effort, hard work and a stash of money.

The truth is, becoming a lawyer is not an easy feat. It requires years of hard work and dedication. Lawyers earn among the average highest annual salaries in the U.S. which makes becoming a lawyer more attractive than lower paying jobs. According to the U.S. News and World Reports the average attorney in the United States makes more than \$126,000.00 a year.

<https://money.usnews.com/careers/best-jobs/lawyer/salary> . It is important to remember to persevere and as Mr. Penney states, "becoming a lawyer is a long arduous process that requires hard work and stamina."

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