MEDICAL, LAW AND GRADUATE SCHOOL GUIDE
CONSIDERING A CAREER IN MEDICINE

Am I the right kind of person for a medical career?
Ask yourself some questions:

• Do I care deeply about other people, their problems, and their pain?
• Do I enjoy helping people with my skills and knowledge?
• Do I enjoy learning, gaining new understanding? Do I often dig deeper into a subject than my teacher requires? Do I understand the value of learning beyond just making good grades?
• Am I interested in how the human body functions? Am I intrigued by the ways medicine can be used to improve life?

If you answered "Yes" to most of these questions, chances are you have the right kind of personality for a medical career.

What is medical school really like? I hear it's long and tough. How long? How tough?
One of the important truths is "things that come easily usually aren’t worth much.” Medical school is challenging. If you want to take responsibility for people's health and well-being, you’ve got to be serious about learning. Once you’ve been accepted, the medical school faculty and staff will do everything they can to help you succeed. In fact, more than 97 percent of entering medical students obtain their M.D. degrees.

The curriculum at many medical schools has changed in recent years. However, here’s a general, quick look at what you can expect during four years of medical school.

During the first two years you will study the basic sciences—anatomy, biochemistry, physiology, microbiology, pathology, and pharmacology—as well as behavioral sciences. You’ll also begin learning the fundamental techniques of taking a medical history and examining patients.

Next, you’ll go into the hospital and various clinics to observe and work with experienced doctors and begin to learn how to take care of patients. At this time you’ll begin to explore the wide variety of career paths within medicine, such as family practice, internal medicine, surgery, psychiatry, obstetrics and gynecology, and pediatrics.

Your final years are spent continuing your contact with patients and doctors in a clinical setting while taking elective courses.

After medical school you will spend three to seven years in a residency, where you will gain further experience and training in the specialty you have chosen. You already may
have an idea of which specialties interest you; however, it’s good to keep an open mind until your third year of medical school.

Medical school usually lasts four years. In general, during the first two years, you study the sciences basic to medicine: anatomy, biochemistry, physiology, microbiology, pathology, and pharmacology, as well as behavioral sciences; introductory patient interviewing and examination techniques; and an introduction to health care. In the third year, you gain experience with patients in hospital, clinic, and office settings in the fields of internal medicine, family medicine, pediatrics, obstetrics and gynecology, surgery, and psychiatry. The fourth year is a mix of required and elective courses where you gain additional experience caring for patients. Each medical school differs in how it organizes its educational program. The Medical School Admission Requirements has specific details.

Medical school is tough. A lot will be demanded of you both in the volume of information you will be expected to master and the rate at which you will be expected to learn. You will need good study habits and time management skills as well as a strong academic background. You also will need to be aware of and tap into the tremendous support, guidance, and mentorship that medical school faculty and staff provide to help you succeed. Medical schools are committed to their students and their education. In general, more than 95 percent of all students enrolled succeed in earning their M.D. degree.

Toward the end of medical school you will choose a specialty; after graduation you will spend at least three years in a graduate medical education (residency) program. During that period you must obtain a license to practice.

**How do I select the right school for premedical education?**
Here are some questions to ask while you consider a college or university. Your career guidance counselor or science teacher can help you find the answers. You also should consult the many college guidebooks found in your school’s guidance office, local libraries, and bookstores.

- Does the school have a good faculty and a reputation for high academic standards? Is it accredited?
- Does it offer a broad range of courses in the humanities and in the social, behavioral, and natural sciences?
- Does it have strong science departments with good laboratory facilities?
- Does it offer all of the required courses I need for acceptance to medical school?
- Does the college have a designated advisor specifically trained to help students interested in the health professions?
- Does it have a good track record for having its students accepted to medical school?
• Does it offer extracurricular activities that appeal to me? Are there programs to do volunteer work at local hospitals or clinics?
• Are there programs where I can demonstrate leadership and compassion?
• Does it “feel right” for me? Am I comfortable with its size, location, social life, and general atmosphere?
• Is it affordable for me and my family?

As you select a college remember that just as in high school, a good liberal arts education is a key ingredient to becoming a physician. You’ll need a strong foundation in mathematics and the sciences that relate most to medicine: biology, general chemistry, organic chemistry, and physics. But it’s important for your college experience to be broad. Taking courses in the humanities or liberal arts will help you prepare for the "people" side of medicine.

How long does it take to get a medical education?
Most would say a lifetime. Doctors are always learning as new discoveries are made and new technologies develop. However, it usually takes four years after college to obtain the M.D. degree. After that, you will choose a medical specialty and spend three years or more as a resident physician in a teaching hospital, where you train for certification in a specialty and will be paid, usually about $30,000 a year, to care for patients.

PREPARING FOR MEDICAL SCHOOL
How should I prepare to apply for medical school?
Your college or university’s premedical advisor can help you through the application process. Medical schools will evaluate you on your college grades, extracurricular activities, and personal characteristics. Most also require you to take the Medical College Admission Test (MCAT), which analyzes your knowledge of the basic sciences, your reading and writing abilities, and your problem-solving skills. You also should consult the resource book, Medical School Admission Requirements, published by the Association of American Medical Colleges, which provides the specific admission requirements of each U.S. and Canadian medical school.

Entrance requirements at most medical schools include completion of course work in biology, mathematics, chemistry, physics, and English. But keep your undergraduate experience well rounded by also studying humanities and the social sciences. The ideal physician understands how society works and can communicate and write well. Extracurricular experiences also are important. You may want to volunteer at a local hospital or clinic to gain practical health care experience.

How do I choose among 125 medical schools?
It’s a process similar to choosing an undergraduate school. Ask yourself these questions:
• Do I prefer a small or large school?
• Do I like a large class or a small class?
• Am I interested in a career in research, in clinical practice in academic medicine? While every school offers opportunities to prepare for careers in all areas, the variety of curricular experience varies from school to school. Try to select schools that fit best your career goals.
• Which schools have a learning approach that emphasizes primary care, patient education, prevention, and preparation for community practice? What schools have a teaching approach that will work well for me?
• What kind of financial resources will I need to attend medical school? What are the costs?
• What types of financial aid are available at the schools I am considering?
• Are the schools in a location that meets my needs?
• Are the schools connected to a university or are they free-standing institutions?

When should I be ready to apply to medical school?
Most people, about 90 percent, apply to medical school at the end of their junior year in college and begin their medical studies after graduation. Others finish college and work for several years before beginning their medical education. Still others participate in "early admissions" or other collaborative programs between undergraduate colleges and medical schools, through which students with a demonstrated level of maturity and academic achievement can proceed to medical education at an accelerated pace.

How do I apply for medical school?
Thanks to the American Medical College Application Service (AMCAS), applying to medical school is not as complicated as you might think. Of the 125 accredited medical schools in the United States, 117 participate in the AMCAS program. To apply to any of these 117 schools, fill out an application, and send it with one set of your official transcripts to AMCAS. After the service verifies the information you provide, it distributes your application to the school(s) you have selected. For schools not participating in AMCAS, contact the admissions office directly for application procedures and materials.

MCAT registration packets should be available through your health professions advisor. Your advisor should also be able to help you learn about the AMCAS process. You must keep on top of appropriate deadlines. Later in your junior year, ask your advisor to help you set up a schedule for submitting all of the necessary documents to insure that your application is fully considered and to eliminate unnecessary stress and anxiety.

After you have submitted your application, some schools will ask for additional information such as a secondary application, letters of recommendation, and your specific interest in their programs.
What will the schools look for and how do they decide?
The key factors affecting acceptance to medical school include the following:

- Successful completion of required undergraduate courses
- Grade point average
- Performance on the Medical College Admission Test (MCAT)
- Extracurricular activities - especially those reflecting public or health-related service, volunteer work, and other evidence of your initiative
- Letters of recommendation from undergraduate health professions advisors and faculty members as well as physicians and other members of the health professions, community leaders, and other individuals who have employed you or supervised your volunteer experience
- Interviews with medical school admissions committees. Unlike colleges, which hold interviews early in the application process, medical schools arrange them near the end. As they narrow their selection of candidates, most medical schools invite the most promising applicants to interview with faculty and other members of the admissions committee.

The MCAT measures your knowledge of subjects within the biological and physical sciences, including chemistry, which are necessary prerequisites for the study of the sciences in medical school. It also tests your ability to read and interpret information and your communication skills.

The MCAT is administered twice a year. You should take the MCAT in the spring of your junior year of college or in the fall of your senior year. Your campus health professions advisor has detailed information about MCAT schedules and information on medical colleges and medical careers. Your advisor also can help you evaluate whether your course mix, grade point average, and MCAT scores are competitive for the medical schools you are considering.

Is getting into medical school as tough as they say?
No question about it—medical schools are looking for the finest minds and the most motivated students who have a strong and demonstrated interest in working with people. It takes a special type of person to even dream of a career in medicine and it takes hard work and commitment to make it to medical school. Today, only about one-half of those who apply are accepted.

FINANCIAL PLANNING
How much does medical school cost and can I afford it?
Annual tuition and fees at state medical schools in 1999 averaged $11,375 for state residents and $25,195 for non-residents. At private schools, tuition and fees averaged $26,991 for residents and $28,733 for nonresidents. These figures do not include housing or living expenses. But don’t let these costs discourage you. A wide array of grants and
loans are available to those who are determined to get a medical education. About 81 percent of medical students borrow money to cover their expenses. Many receive substantial financial assistance through programs that provide loans guaranteed by the federal government.

You will need to plan your budget carefully however, so that you don't end up with more debt than is necessary. Once you have been accepted to a medical school, work with the school’s financial aid officer to develop the best package to meet your needs.

Most medical students borrow at least a portion of the money they need to finance their education. About 81 percent of medical school graduates carry some education debt. In 2000, the median amount of that debt was more than $95,000. That’s a significant debt for a young doctor; however, a medical education is an investment that keeps returning dividends over and over, all your life.

There are many options for loans and scholarships, some of which may minimize your potential debt. Some are based on need. Others are not. Some loans are targeted specifically to individuals who are seeking careers in primary care. Federally sponsored loans include the Perkins, the subsidized and unsubsidized Stafford FFEL (Federal Family Education Loan), the subsidized and unsubsidized Ford FDSL (Federal Direct Student Loan), and the Health Education Assistance Loan (HEAL). Several non-federal alternative loan programs also are available.

The Association of American Medical Colleges sponsors a comprehensive loan program, MEDLOANS, that provides students access to several federal programs, and an alternative loan program, through the completion of one loan application. MEDLOANS also provides pre-approval of access to alternative loan funds for four years of medical school to qualified students.

Various grants and scholarship programs also are available from the federal government and from individual medical schools. Federal programs include the Armed Forces Health Professions Scholarship and the National Health Service Corps. Scholarships for underrepresented minority students also are available through the National Medical Fellowships.

The best plan is to meet with the medical school financial aid office after being accepted to develop a budget and financial aid program based on your need and resources.

31 QUESTIONS I WISH I HAD ASKED
Medical schools, like individuals, are very different—in their philosophies, faculties, curricula, and the type of students they attract. Consequently, selecting the "best" medical school for you can be very challenging. The following set of questions was compiled by medical students from across the country to assist you in evaluating the schools you will visit. This list is by no means complete; it was designed to serve as a
base for your own questions. Keep in mind that the interview represents a wonderful time for you to learn, so don’t be shy about asking anyone your questions. Congratulations on your career choice and good luck with interviews!

Organization of Student Representatives
Association of American Medical Colleges
January 1992

1. Are there any special programs for which this medical school is noted?

Curriculum
2. Describe this school’s curriculum in the pre-clinical and clinical years. Are there any innovations, like Problem-Based Learning?
3. Are there opportunities for students to design, conduct, and publish their own research?
4. Is there a note-taking service? If so, is it University-run or student-run?
5. Is there flexibility in the coursework (the number of electives) and the timing of the courses (accelerating, decelerating, and time off) during the pre-clinical and clinical years?
6. Has this medical school, or any of its clinical departments, been on probation or had its accreditation revoked?
7. How do students from this medical school perform on the National Board Examinations? How does the school assist students who do not pass?

Evaluations
8. How are students evaluated academically? How are clinical evaluations performed?
9. Is there a formal mechanism in place for students to evaluate their professors and attending physicians? What changes have been made recently as a result of this feedback?

Counseling/Student Support
10. What kind of academic, personal, financial, and career counseling is available to students? Are these services also offered to their spouses and dependents/children?
11. Is there a mentor/advisor system? Who are the advisors—faculty members, other students, or both?
12. How diverse is the student body? Are there support services or organizations for ethnic minorities and women?

Facilities
13. Tell me about the library and extracurricular facilities (i.e., housing and athletic/recreational facilities).
14. Are there computer facilities available to students? Are they integrated into the curriculum/learning?
15. What type of clinical sites—ambulatory, private preceptors, private hospitals, rural settings—are available or required for clerkships? Does this school allow for students to do rotations at other institutions or internationally?

16. Is a car necessary for clinical rotations? Is parking a problem?

Financial Aid
17. What is the current tuition and fees? Is this expected to increase yearly? If so, at what rate?
18. Are there stable levels of federal financial aid and substantial amounts of university/medical school endowment aid available to students?
19. Are there students who have an "unmet need" factor in their budget? If so, where do these students come up with the extra funds?
20. Are spouses and dependents/children covered in a student’s budget?
21. Is someone available to assist students with budgeting and financial planning?
22. Does this school provide guidance to its students, and to its graduates/alumni, on debt management?

Student Involvement
23. What medical school committees (e.g., curriculum committee) have student representation?
24. Are students involved in (required or voluntary) community service?
25. How active is the Student Council/Government? Are there other student organizations?

Policies
26. Is there an established protocol for dealing with student exposure to infectious diseases? Is disability insurance provided to cover this exposure?
27. Does this school provide, or does the student pay for, vaccinations against Hepatitis B or prophylactic AZT treatment in case of a needle-stick or accident?
28. Is there a school Honor Code? Is there a grievance process/procedure? Are the students involved?

Residency
29. May I see a list of residency programs to which this school’s recent graduates were accepted?

Questions to Ask Yourself
30. Does this school have strengths in the type of medicine (primary versus specialized care, urban versus rural practice environment, academic medicine versus private practice) that I will want to practice?
31. Would I be happy at this school (for at least the next four years)?

References:


31 questions i wish i had asked. (n.d.) Retrieved August 9, 2005 from http://www.aamc.org/students/applying/about/31questions.htm.
WHAT IS A LAWYER?
Lawyers interpret the law through actions and words for the protection of an individual, a business concern or an idea. They must be widely versed in a great many areas: the law, economics, history, human motivation and behavior, and the practicalities of day to day living. The education of lawyers never ends because they must constantly be abreast of information which may be of use to the client.

As our society grows in complexity, the lawyer’s role grows as well. No longer is it possible for one single lawyer to handle every aspect of every client’s legal needs. Although well informed as to the tax implications of stock market transactions, a lawyer may not know enough to cover adequately the client’s requirements for divorce proceedings, for instance. For this reason, the vast majority of today’s lawyers are specifying the types of clients and cases which they will serve. It is important to understand, however, that even though the legal profession itself is specializing, the law school and pre-legal education remain general in nature. Any specialization you choose to follow must take place after you graduate from law school, pass the bar examination, and enter the professional world. The type you choose to practice may depend upon employment conditions when you begin, your personal interest and background, the amount of money you want to earn, the area of the country in which you want to live, etc. If you enjoy working with numbers or have a great concern for the welfare of society, you’re a natural for some particular legal specialties; see descriptions below.

So how can you know if you’ll like being a lawyer? The practice of law includes so many alternatives that it is difficult to generalize at all. Many lawyers in large corporate firms concentrate their efforts in mastering one particular area of specialization within the law, e.g. the intricacies of tax law. These attorneys often serve primarily as advisors to corporate clients, rarely being involved with taking a case to court. Litigation lawyers, on the other hand, prepare and present cases in court or negotiate to settle the case before the scheduled court appearance. Practicing law in a small town or with a small community-based firm often means taking whatever cases walk through the door. This kind of practice tends to focus more on the daily legal needs of individuals - drawing up wills or deeds, filing for divorces, getting someone out of jail on bond, settling personal damage suits in court - rather than the more technical and specialized needs of corporate clients. Success is often due more to the quality of your personal interactions and persuasiveness than to your intellectual capabilities.

Although various kinds of legal practice are different in many ways, there are some common links. First of all, clients come to lawyers with a certain set of facts - the specific details of their experience. They come seeking a remedy. Your task as the attorney is to use your skills and understanding of the law to support their cases. Clients tend not to concern themselves with theory although you may think cases pose some interesting issues. They want you to take the facts - their facts - and weave the details into a case to support their position. Your success as a lawyer is determined by the extent to which
you serve the best interests of your clients. Your satisfaction in a legal career is also in part determined by the extent to which you like the interests and clients you serve.

It is impossible to list and explain all of the various types of law practiced in the United States today. The following descriptions cover the legal fields most widely known and available to beginning lawyers. Most law schools have very sophisticated methods with which to assist you in finding appropriate employment opportunities. Your law school placement office will be able to give you more complete information when you need it. The following descriptions are presented only to give you an idea of what some types of lawyers do. You should also be aware that some of the descriptions given here may fit other titles as it is often difficult to differentiate between types of law which may overlap a great deal, i.e. what is entitled comparative law here may be considered international law by some. You must also realize that the descriptions are only brief summaries and do not cover everything that the lawyer working in that specialty does.

**Comparative Law** A lawyer who chooses this specialty must have a good working knowledge of the laws, society, and government of at least one country other than the United States. This usually means that the lawyer has attended both college and law school in the United States as well as a formal educational institution in the foreign country with whose affairs s/he will eventually work. The comparative lawyer works with international relations in trade and commerce, travel, government business, and many other areas depending upon the breadth of his/her knowledge and the needs of his/her employer. The field of comparative law is one in which there is a great deal of opportunity for advancement and challenging work. Comparative lawyers may find their employment with business firms, with government organizations, or with any person or group which deals with countries other than the United States.

**Environmental Law** One of the newest entries in the legal world, environmental law requires a concern for the nation’s resources, knowledge of where the resources are, what they are used for, how and why they may be endangered or exploited, and whose job it is to protect them. Environmental lawyers may work alone or in and for groups whose job it is to prosecute offenders and remedy the offending situation. On the other side of the coin, environmental lawyers may represent the "offenders" to prove why the exploitation is not bad or is not what it seems to be. Finally, they may mediate between concerned groups and help generate arrangements which will benefit the country, the consumers, and the corporation.

**Patent Law** Patent Law is the only legal specialty officially recognized by the American Bar Association. It is also one of the few areas of legal practice which requires a specific educational background usually in the natural sciences, mathematics, or engineering. This background is required because the work a patent lawyer does is to see that no one has already patented a client’s idea and that no one "borrows" the client’s idea after it has been patented. To do this the lawyer must thoroughly understand the client’s idea and
be able to ascertain whether differences occur in similar ideas or if, indeed, the idea has already been used or is being "borrowed". Patent lawyers are usually employed by large firms whose research teams may constantly be coming up with new ideas to be protected or by large law firms where they handle individual clients and companies who seek the advice of the lawyer. Sometimes patent lawyers enter private practice and work as representatives to individuals and companies.

**Poverty Law and Legal Services** A general title for a great number of legal opportunities, poverty law and legal services offers a lawyer the chance to represent and protect those in our society who may not have the money or the knowledge to help themselves. Many law schools are now offering third year students and occasionally second year students the option of working with poverty law clients as part of an internship or clinical program. If your law school offers this as an elective, it is not only an excellent method of acquainting yourself with the real "meat" of this particular type of law practice, it is also a fine introduction into the legal world itself as it shows the student the kind of knowledge s/he will be called upon to utilize every day. In addition, it serves as a respite from what may become academic tedium during the later years of law school. Poverty law and legal services encompass positions such as the district attorney and public defenders in city governments, legal aid work, and government groups such as VISTA and the Peace Corps which have recently introduced legal work into their programs of assistance. If you are considering this type of law, do not expect to make a lot of money, expect to be very busy, and realize that your services will be sought by many and may be appreciated by only a few. For the vast majority of the lawyers who enter this type of law, the clients' appreciation when it occurs is the finest reward.

**Tax Law** A tax lawyer assists people or businesses in the computation and payment of taxes of all kinds: income, property, estate, etc. A good background in statistics, mathematics and/or business, as well as a genuine enjoyment of working with numbers are basic necessities for the tax lawyer. LLM degrees (the Master of Law Letters degree which follows the JD or LLB degree) can be received in tax law in a number of law school graduate divisions around the country. This is one of the specific areas in which the LLM degree is most frequently pursued. Tax law is a growing field because of the increasing complexity of the financial status of the United States and its private citizens. If you satisfy the requirements of the field, your work in private practice or as a corporation tax lawyer can be a lucrative career.

**Corporate Law** The corporate lawyer deals with the entirety of a corporation's activities from settling tax, employment, or labor problems, to setting up mergers between and among corporations and arranging stock options. Generally, a corporate lawyer is one of a team of lawyers, each handling or assisting in the handling of only one of the activities areas. A corporate lawyer, therefore, may be any one of the preceding types of lawyers and also be a corporate lawyer. For instance, an environmental lawyer may be employed
by Kodak and still retain both titles of environmental and corporate lawyer; one does not preclude the other. Corporate law opportunities are unlimited and offer continually broadening horizons commensurate with the growth of the corporation.

*Criminal Law* Criminal Law involves just what the label implies: persons accused of crimes. Lawyers who specialize in criminal law may work on either side of the adversary process -- defense or prosecution. Those who defend the accused may work in private practice or in a public defender's office. Those who work for the prosecution side will generally be employed by the government, e.g. in District Attorneys' offices, etc. At the higher levels of government (e.g. the Federal Justice Department), criminal lawyers will often find themselves defending the accused, because their role will be to argue cases that are being appealed on constitutional grounds.

As previously stated, there are many more types of law from which to choose; what you choose will depend upon your present interests and your interests as they develop in law school. There is no reason to make your decision now as to what type of law you will practice; the legal profession changes constantly and you may find your own interests changing as you become exposed to more and more information.

**WHAT IS LAW SCHOOL LIKE?**

Law schools prepare you to think like a lawyer; the only thing that can prepare you to be a lawyer is the experience of being a lawyer. Through the study of cases, laws, procedures, etc., you will be exposed to and prepared for your entry into the legal world.

The first year of law school is fairly standard throughout the United States (except in law schools like Northeastern which have work study programs; see their bulletin for a description of their program). Your curriculum for the first year will probably include the study of torts, contracts, property, criminal law and procedure, and civil procedure. There is rarely the opportunity for elective course work during the first year, though some schools have first year seminars addressing themselves to specific topics. Most courses continue for the full nine month first academic year. During the second and third years of law school, the vast majority of the course work is elective and generally lasts a semester or a quarter, depending upon the set-up of your school. It is during the second and third years that clinical and internship experience may become available, and electives may determine for you your future line of work. These years are the best time for you to experiment with your reactions to different types of law. While you are in law school, it is fairly simple to sample different approaches and material. Once you have graduated, it can be expensive and somewhat traumatic to continually switch fields. Try to get the best idea possible of your legal interests during your three years of legal study.
GETTING IN TO LAW SCHOOL

1. **Apply to 6-10 schools.** Two -three schools should be "reach" schools where your chances of getting in are somewhat lower than 30-40% according to the data in the guide books. Another three schools should be in the middle range and include those where your chances are 40-60% of acceptance. You should also apply to two -three schools where you have a high likelihood of being accepted. These "safety" schools should be chosen carefully since you may find that you may need to enroll at one of them later.

2. **Most law schools do not interview applicants** though many will see you if you do come and provide a tour. However, little weight is put on the interview since the vast majority of applicants do not come, nor do the schools want them to come given the volume of applicants.

3. **Most schools now have rolling admissions and will accept their most desirable applicants early.** If you do not hear until March or April you are likely in the larger pool of "maybes" and you may be in a "holding pattern" even until June as they see how their first choices decide where to go. If you are placed on a wait list or do not hear you should follow up with a call to confirm your status. Wait list applicants should send a letter indicating their interest and send any new information such as last terms grades, awards or honors since the application.

4. **Many schools will continue to admit students over the summer as others drop out or accept other admission invitations.** So do not assume that you have no chance of being admitted if you are on the wait list. Continue to stay in touch with the school. Some schools have evening divisions and you may ask if you can begin in that program and then move up to the day program if you do well. Some schools accept transfers and you may consider going to your safety school and applying as a transfer student in January or for the second year.

5. **In choosing a law school to attend, be aware of the cost.** If no scholarship is offered remember that financial aid must be repaid. It may be worth considering law schools that are cheaper or offer more aid. However, be aware that it may pay to go to a much better law school and refuse aid to a weaker law school. This is because the starting salary at the better law school is so much higher, that your loans can be paid back quicker. All ABA approved law schools participate in the guaranteed loan programs that allow eligible students to borrow approximately $18,000 per year for graduate school.

6. **Law schools put the majority of their emphasis on your GPA and LSAT scores,** however, all complete files are read by one person in admissions at least and they will read your references, personal statement, and transcript and give appropriate weight to things such as strength and difficulty of major, quality of the undergraduate school, quality of the personal statement and enthusiasm for the applicant in the letters of
reference. So when applying give strong consideration to whom you choose to write references and prepare your file so as to make sure your strengths are known.

ABOUT THE LSAT
The Law School Admission Test (LSAT) is a half-day standardized test required for admission to all ABA-approved law schools, most Canadian law schools, and many non-ABA-approved law schools. It provides a standard measure of acquired reading and verbal reasoning skills that law schools can use as one of several factors in assessing applicants. The test is administered four times a year at hundreds of locations around the world.

Many law schools require that the LSAT be taken by December for admission the following fall. However, taking the test earlier—in June or October—is often advised.

*Please visit www.lsac.org for additional information about taking the LSAT exam.*

LSAT TIPS
Applicants to law school dread the LSAT, the Law School Admission Test. Sure, your score on the LSAT is critical to admission to law school, so take the time to prepare and remember the following tips:

- **Remember that you don't have to answer every question correctly.** You could get 2-3 answers wrong and still get a score of 180. At about 15-17 correct answers your score will move above a 120. After that, about every 3 correct answers will bring up your score about 2 points.

- **Scores as based on correct answers only** and there is no penalty for wrong answers, so don’t leave any answers blank!

- **Get used to dealing with logic.** Read and practice with an elementary logic text. Learn to recognize common logical fallacies. Take a course in logic.

- **Practice learning how to focus your attention and read actively** because you’ll have to read carefully and quickly with no time for rereading.

- **Don't answer from your own knowledge or experience, but from the information given.** That’s critical! Don’t read anything into a problem - answer the question based on the information given, not your assumptions.

- **The reading comprehension section requires the ability to read actively and pull out the essential points.** Use only the information provided in the reading -- not in your own experience to answer questions.
• To prepare for the logical reasoning section, bone up on rules of logical reasoning and common logical fallacies.

• When completing the analytical reasoning section, read carefully and understand the conditions that mark the relationships in the "game" or question. Some find it easier to create a diagram to illustrate the relationships.

• When you begin your writing sample, create an outline first to organize your ideas. The clarity and organization of your essay are critical, so use an outline to mark your points before you begin writing and ensure that you have enough information to make an argument for your position (and support it well).

References:


WHAT TO CONSIDER WHEN DECIDING TO GO TO GRADUATE SCHOOL

You are going to graduate school to learn. Therefore, your number one concern should be the other end of that process -- who's going to teach you? Because you will be working closely with many of your professors, especially if you are writing a thesis or dissertation, you should find out who's who in the departments to which you are applying.

You should find out who the major players are in the department, what their research involves, what they've earned their degree in, where they are published, what their reputation is, and where they earned their degrees. From there you should evaluate if you think their research would be relevant to your interests, and if you think you want to work with them and contribute to their findings -- or would you be better served elsewhere?

Try to schedule an interview with the faculty members you are most interested in working with. This can give you some insight on the program itself and the dynamics involved in the department.

Talk to the Students
An important and easy way to gauge whether or not a department will work out for you is by talking to the other students who are a part of it. Do they enjoy working with their professors? Do they feel they have been given enough guidance and opportunity to develop their own research? Are they pressured to follow certain methodology? What are the good points and the bad points of the department and the school?

Research Facilities
Since you will be spending much of your time doing research, you should check to make sure that the institution has adequate facilities for your particular needs. What kind of labs do they have? Are there restrictions? Is the equipment up-to-date and easily accessible? Do they have an extensive library and library exchange program

CHOOSING A GRAD SCHOOL
Like deciding whether or not to go to graduate school, selecting target schools is more complex than it first seems. Filling out applications is a huge demand on your time and energy, and whether you’re taking undergraduate exams or holding down a job, you probably can’t afford to spend weeks dealing with a large pile of applications.

Applications are a financial drain as well: Grad-school application fees range from $20 to $90, and average about $50. These high fees are no accident. Many universities, with admissions committees swamped by record numbers of applications, have raised their fees in order to prevent less-motivated applicants from applying and reduce the number
of incoming applications. Given today's fees, you can expect ten applications to cost you a total of about $500, and possibly more -- and that's before you figure in postage, transcript handling fees, photocopying, and so on. It can really add up.

Next Steps
Economically speaking, you can see that the saturation-bombing technique that a lot of people use to apply to college isn't very practical for grad school. It pays -- in time and money -- to narrow your field down to four or five good target schools.

To size up a graduate school, you'll look at three major factors: the academic quality of the program; your chances of getting into that program; and the practical considerations that affect your choice.

The Academic Fit
In selecting schools, the most important aspect of any school is its academic fit -- that is, how well-suited the school is to the research you want to do. If you're a prospective grad student in, say, philosophy, then it's certainly a good idea to find out where the leading philosophy departments are; but to have a really good graduate experience, you need more than just a respected department. You need individuals on the faculty who share your research interests, and who will become involved in your work and involve you in their own.

The importance of finding professors to work with varies according to your degree ambitions. If you're looking for a master's degree to round out your education or give you that professional edge, then the overall quality of the faculty may be more important to you than finding the ideal mentor. If you are decided on doctoral work and an academic career, however, then the specific research interests of professors become much more important. In either case, graduate work will always be more profitable and enjoyable if there are professors in your program who will take a personal interest in what you're doing.

GRE TEST - TAKING TIPS AND TECHNIQUES
Be Aware
By the time you have finished your GRE preparation, you should be aware of the type of questions that will appear in the GRE Test. You should also be aware of how long each section is and the time limits. This will help you pace yourself through the test.

Know the directions for each question
Knowing the directions for the questions beforehand will save you valuable time. But remember the directions for the questions in the GRE Test might be slightly different from the ones in your study material. So always read the instructions but do it quickly.
Don't stick to one question for too long
By the time you have finished your GRE preparation, you should have a good estimate of how much time you can give to a particular question. Don't get stuck on one particular question for too long. This might cause you to lose precious time and miss questions you could have easily done.

Don't Rush
The GRE Test is about optimizing. Finishing the paper first is not what is important. You should devote just the right amount of time to each question. Maximizing your marks in a given period of time is your aim. So don't rush it as that might cost you valuable marks.

The questions at the beginning are the most important
The questions at the beginning affect your score more than those towards the end. Take your time with those questions. It is vital that you get those questions right. Getting these correct will dramatically improve your score.

Selection by elimination
When you don't know the answers to some questions, try and use the method of elimination. You may have a very good idea of which option cannot be the answer. Eliminate such options. It narrows down your guess to just maybe two options and sometimes down to one.

Don't leave any question unanswered
The GRE Test does not penalize you for wrong answers. So never leave any question unanswered.

Be very sure of your answer before proceeding
With the Computer-Adaptive Test (CAT) for GRE, you cannot return to a question once you have attempted it. You cannot leave the difficult questions for later nor can you check your answers towards the end even if you have extra time. So pace yourself properly and be very certain of your answers.

Get adequate rest the night before
Before the test, relax. Research shows a person who is relaxed usually does much better than a person who is tense during an exam. Get enough sleep before the D-Day. Also if your GRE is in the morning, take a light breakfast. A heavy one might make you drowsy.

Do a test drive exactly a week before your test
Getting to the test center on time is vital. In fact you should try and get to the test center 15-30 minutes before time. Taking a test drive to your test center exactly a week before
might be a good idea. This will give you a rough idea of the traffic conditions at the time and day of your GRE.

**Wear Comfortable Clothes**
Wear comfortable clothes to your GRE test center. It might be a good idea to carry a sweater or a jacket, in case you start feeling cold. Also make a check list well in advance of what all you need on the D-day and keep everything ready the night before. One of the things you need is a chronometer. (In case you don't know what that means, start preparing for the GRE vocabulary ;-) )

**Use the scratch paper the test center provides**
You are not allowed to bring any sheets of paper to the GRE test center but are provided scratch paper by the center. You should make effective use of this to make quick notes for yourself or for solving math questions.

**And lastly DON'T PANIC**
No matter what happens, DON'T PANIC. Keep your cool all the time, even when you don't know the answer. Once you panic, you might even answer the easiest questions wrongly. If you feel yourself getting tense, take a short break, ask for a glass of water, close your eyes, take deep breaths and calm yourself down.

**References:**
