

Here is a short list of books about lawyers that you may enjoy reading:

▶ *The Story of My Life* by Clarence Darrow

A personal memoir about civil rights law.

▶ *The Legal Analyst: A Toolkit for Thinking about the Law* by Ward Farnsworth

▶ *A Lesson Before Dying* by Ernest J. Gaines

▶ *1861: The Civil War Awakening* by Adam Goodheart

Riveting description of the year the war started. It reads like a thriller, but is full of bits of history and constitutional law that lawyers will love

▶ *The Innocent Man* by John Grisham

▶ *Snow Falling on Cedars* by David Guterson

▶ *Colossus: Hoover Dam and the Making of the American Century* by Michael Hiltzik

A description of the politics and legal maneuverings leading up to building the Hoover Dam

▶ *The Paper Chase* by John Jay Osborne:

A fictional account of a year at Harvard Law School

▶ *To Kill a Mockingbird* by Harper Lee:

The classic tale of a widower lawyer raising his children and defending a black man accused of a crime in the divided South

▶ *Gideon's Trumpet* by Anthony Lewis:

The true story of the Supreme Court case that guaranteed the poor the right to a lawyer in a criminal case

▶ *Leadership on the Federal Bench: The Craft and Activism of Jack Weinstein* by Jeffrey B. Morris

▶ *My Life in Court* by Louis Nizer

A personal memoir of the life of Louis Nizer

▶ *And the Dead Shall Rise: The Murder of Mary Phagan and the Lynching of Leo Frank* by Steve Oney

▶ *In the Shadow of the Law* by Kermit Roosevelt

▶ *One L: The Turbulent True Story of a First Year at Harvard Law School* by Scott Turow

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Revised February 2015

Reprint Permission from The Chicago Bar Association
Young Lawyers Section July 2010.

So, you want
to be a
lawyer?



HERE'S WHAT
YOU NEED
TO KNOW

Being a Lawyer

Working as a lawyer can be a rewarding career choice. A lawyer advises clients in their business and personal affairs. That means that lawyers assist in buying or selling homes, adopting children, starting businesses and planning for the needs of their clients' businesses and families and also assist clients with litigation in court.

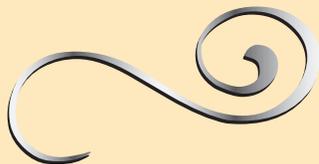
While being a lawyer can sometimes be financially rewarding, it takes years of long hard work and dedication. The payoff comes from doing a good job, helping your client and seeing that justice is done. Don't be fooled by what you see on television. Lawyers work hard. Some work for the government, some work in law firms and others work for companies or alone. Many lawyers work for public interest groups representing the poor, protecting the environment or defending our civil liberties. Other lawyers become judges or professors.

The choice is up to you.

What it takes

Lawyers come from all sorts of backgrounds, races and experiences. Despite the differences, there is one training program that all lawyers complete: they have graduated from high school, college and law school. In addition, before you can work as a lawyer, you generally have to pass the state bar exam, a national legal ethics exam, and receive a license to practice law. This pamphlet provides guidance on how to become a lawyer.

One important thing to remember is that if you are convicted of a crime, you will have to disclose that fact on your law school and bar applications. Many people convicted of crimes have gone on to become lawyers. Still, a criminal record will complicate the process and probably make it more difficult to get the job you want.



High School

The first step to becoming a lawyer is completing high school. Take advantage of classes and activities that help you develop writing and public speaking skills. Take a speech class or participate in drama or debate; write short stories, news articles and essays; be a leader in student government and activities; join your high school's mock trial team; practice your analytic skills through English, math and science classes. If you want to get into your first choice of college and law school, the most important thing is to maintain your good grades and graduate.

College

A four-year college degree is the next step. No particular major is required to become a lawyer. Many college students who want to be lawyers select traditional liberal arts majors, such as history, literature or philosophy. Other students choose majors to prepare them to specialize in a particular area of law, such as technology, medicine, art, the environment, finance, government or other areas. It really does not matter.

If you have a strong interest in any undergraduate major, pursue it and focus on getting the best grades you can. Take a sampling of classes from different areas, such as English, philosophy, government, political science, communications, psychology, sociology and business. Many colleges offer a "pre-law" program designed for students hoping to go to law school. However, pre-law program is not required for law school and may even limit your chance to be exposed to a broad range of classes and activities. Ask your college advisors about the advantages and disadvantages of participating in a pre-law program.

Law School and the Bar Exam

To get into law school, you must take the national Law School Admission Test (LSAT), usually the summer before your final year in college. The LSAT measures your reading, logic and analytic skills. The test combines five multiple choice sections

and a writing sample. There are study guides and commercial classes to help you prepare for the LSAT. Law schools review your LSAT score and college grades when you apply for admission, so good grades and a good LSAT score should be among your goals.

Several law school guidebooks explaining the admission standards at each of the law schools are available in libraries and bookstores. There are over 170 law schools in the country, so you will be able to find one that is right for you.

It takes three years to complete law school if you attend full time. Some schools offer night or parttime programs. Law school teaches the fundamentals of law, with courses such as contract law, civil procedure, property law, tax law and legal writing. You will also spend time gaining experience in mock courts, writing for law journals, and working as a clerk for judges or law firms.

After law school, you must take and pass the bar exam in the state where you want to work. This exam tests your practical knowledge of law, ethics, and legal procedures. There is no limit on the number of times you can sit for the written exam. In most states, you must graduate from an American Bar Association (ABA) approved law school to be permitted to take the bar exam. Ask if the school you want to attend is approved or contact the ABA at www.americanbar.org to check. You will also have to take and pass a national legal ethics exam. Once you have passed both exams, the state gives you a license to practice law in that state.

To Find Out More

Talk to your guidance counselor. If you know any lawyers, talk to them about their jobs. Ask a teacher, Scout leader, or other adult to arrange to take a group to watch a trial at your local courthouse or invite a lawyer to speak to your class or group.