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## BEST LAW SCHOOL BUILDINGS

THE BEST BUILDINGS OFFER SPACE,  
GREAT AESTHETICS, AMENITIES  
AND CONNECT STUDENTS WITH THE  
LOCAL COMMUNITY



# How to prepare for law school

For those making the big leap soon, here is some key advice on how to make the transition over the summer. For instance: Can you read the bottom line of an eye chart? **BY KATIE THISDELL**

So, it's official. You're going to law school. All the hard work has paid off, and you've made your deposit to confirm your seat.

Now it's time to kick back and relax until the new academic year starts.

Or not . . .

Sure, you could embark on a luxury vacation. (You're probably going to be making six figures someday, after all.) Or you could pre-read all the textbooks you'll soon be swamped with. (Get ahead while you can.) Or, just for practice, you could take legal action at every opportunity that presents itself. (What's the point of being a lawyer if you can't sue?)

Choices, choices . . .

Yes, you should have some fun and relax. And yes, doing some advance preparation could help you start off your law school career on the right foot. But during this time, it's important to maintain a clear head and make reasonable decisions.

Such as not threatening to sue people. You're still far, far from being a bar-certified lawyer.

"The minute you know you're going (to law school), or the minute you think you want to go, you start acting like a professional," said Diane Kraft, director of the Academic Achievement Program at University of Denver Sturm College of



Law. (That means on social media too. Those posts can haunt you.)

So let's get ready. The next few weeks will fly by.

## Get Ready

Start with a to-do list. Don't think about academics just yet, but focus on what you'll need to do to make the transition to your new school and your new lifestyle.

"I think the most important thing is to make sure your life is set up for when you start law school," said Alison Monahan, founder of The Girl's Guide to Law School and co-founder of Law School Toolbox.

This means taking care of things such as housing, medical checkups and finances, along with mentally preparing yourself and your family.

"All these things seem kind of obvious,

but they can really derail that first semester," Monahan said.

This also includes setting good habits and building life skills.

Do you know how to cook healthful and affordable meals?

Do you have a regular workout regimen? Start one. Do you have the right clothes? If you're going straight from undergrad to law school, now might be a good time to shop for a suit and some business casual attire for networking.

Interviews start earlier than you may expect, and if they fall during exam time, you'll be thankful that you don't have to rush around to find appropriate clothing then.

When was the last time you visited the doctor?

"Get your eyes checked," a person with law school experience wrote on Reddit. "You have a lot of reading ahead of you. I didn't do this, and it made first



semester a pain. Honestly, just schedule any doctor/dentist-type appointments you need now. It's annoying to fit them in during the semester."

How is your typing ability? Can you type quickly and accurately? At exam time you will thank yourself if you take steps now to improve.

"I work with students who have struggled a bit in their first semester because they didn't type fast enough to finish their exams," Kraft said.

When taking an exam on a computer, fast and accurate typists have an advantage since they can get their thoughts from their brains to the keyboard more quickly, and every minute counts.

Are you organized? Buy a planner or try out some scheduling and calendar apps. As summer winds down, start blocking off times for your classes, study sessions, reading and deep work, exercise and more.

By checking off these things early in

the summer, you'll be in a better position to actually enjoy some time to unwind later on, said Denée Page, assistant dean of enrollment management at Syracuse University College of Law.



## Have Fun

Woo hoo! Summer break!

Stay up late, sleep in, watch Netflix or lie by the pool all day. There's nothing much better than that feeling of being utterly relaxed.

If you've just wrapped up your undergrad career, soak up this time.

"If they are coming out of school, the likelihood that they will have two months again is nonexistent," Page said of incoming law students.

After law school, after all, you'll be preparing for and taking the bar, and then starting your first law job.

"It doesn't end from there," Page said.

So enjoy some uninterrupted free time. Soak up the sun during a week with friends at the beach. Take your family hiking in the mountains or the desert.

But maybe you will be working a summer job or finishing up the final months of your current job before returning to school. Not everyone will have the luxury of a completely free summer. But if you can, try to take some sort of mental break, however possible.

Having fun is a personal choice. For some, it can be learning to paint or play the violin or curling up with a good book.

Actually, reading can be a benefit when it comes to law school.

"Let's be honest. 1L year is chock-full of reading," said Lisa Young, senior director of academics and product at Kaplan Bar Review. "And it's not just getting through all of the assigned materials, but comprehending what is being read. To prepare, it can be very helpful to start reg-

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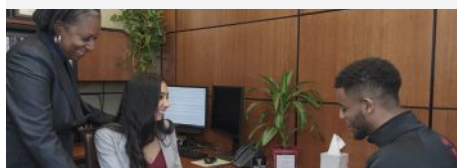


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ularly reading for fun prior to law school. Reading for enjoyment is a great way to improve reading speed and comprehension skills that are critical during the 1L year. Even those who are already avid readers should take the summer to enjoy reading books for fun while they still have time to do so.”

## Friends and Family

Starting law school is like starting a demanding, full-time job. At times, you’ll feel like an overworked employee, desperate for time for yourself and time to spend with family and friends.

“From my perspective, what I wish I had done is don’t take for granted the free time you’re going to have to spend with people you won’t see much for the next three years,” Page said. “Get that in, because it’s a really important thing.”

You also need to remember that this is no ordinary 9-to-5 job. It will require work in the evenings and on weekends. So talk about what that will mean for

your peeps, and prepare partners and children especially for the big changes ahead.

It’s also time to build a support system. Get child care lined up, and ask for help from family and friends. Check what resources your university has available, Page advised, including fellow students who can share advice, or organizations for partners, or day care with reasonable rates.

Kraft, who went to law school after working, said her fellow students who had families were the ones who seemed to have everything together.

“People who are busy get things done,” Kraft said. “They know how to manage their time, and they know how to be incredibly organized.”



## Books, Prep Courses, Orientations

Now’s a good time to pick up a book or two about law school. We’re not talking about academic books. Save those until school starts. We’re talking about books on how law school is structured and how to prepare.

“Law school is a different way of doing school than people are used to in undergrad,” Monahan said.

Don’t read more than one advice book though, Kraft advises. “Don’t read them as gospel. It’s one person’s opinion.”

If you want to go a little deeper, consider attending any early orientation programs that your school offers or perhaps a commercial prep course. Everyone’s needs are different, so there is no right or wrong decision.

Kraft is an advocate of school-sponsored programs. They’ll teach you how law school works. But more importantly, they give you a chance to get to know your classmates, build a support system

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and feel at home in your new surroundings.

"That's just as important as any academic preparation," she said.

And such programs won't chew up your entire summer — not even close. Syracuse University College of Law offers Orange Edge, a 10-day program designed to prepare students for their first semester. Approximately one-third of the incoming class enrolls, Page said.

"It's just a good way to get a leg up," she said. "It's especially good for students with no experience with law, or they've been out of school for a couple of years. It's also great because it makes orientation a little less awkward."

Another option is to enroll in a commercial prep course or a summer program hosted by your local or state bar association.

Young said programs such as Kaplan's help students to think like lawyers and prepare for exams by focusing on case

briefing, outlining, IRAC writing and how to ace law school finals.

Law grads have mixed reviews on the helpfulness and necessity of prep courses.

"I'd say it was marginally helpful," one wrote on Reddit about a weeklong program. "Once the school year started, I already had some familiarity with some of the concepts, which was nice. It probably made me feel more confident in the first weeks."

Said another: "They are not worth the money or the time. No one knows what they're doing at the beginning of law school. Don't waste your free time/money on a course."

No matter what you decide, make sure you strike a balance between being prepared and becoming stressed out and exhausted.

"Trying to do more and more and more will make you feel like you haven't had that necessary mental break," Page said.



## Settling In

Figure out where you're going to live by early in the summer, especially if you'll be in a city known for housing shortages.

If you're moving to a new city, give yourself a bit of time to settle in. Our experts recommend at least a week, and if possible, even longer. Then you can set up your new room or apartment and explore your surroundings before you get busy with classes.

The more time you have, the more comfortable you can become in your new surroundings.



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