

Top Five Things I Wish I Knew When I Applied to Law School

Summary: *Learn five things you should look out for when you apply to law school.*

With application deadlines looming in the air for many law school hopefuls, my own experience of the application process and the many facts that came to light after I'd already begun, or even finished, law school, have been swarming through my mind. To save many applicants heartache down the line, here are five things that I wish I could have told my younger self as I was going through the same process:

1. Prestige matters.

I know very few people want to hear this, or admit this, but it's the truth. People may tell you it's only the degree you need, not the school name, or that certain schools are known locally and that will matter in your city of choice. While that may be true in some circumstances, generally people care about prestige. When it comes to applying for summer internships, judicial clerkships, or jobs after school, the truth is the name of your school can carry a great deal of weight.

For another take on whether law school prestige matters, see the following article:

[10 Factors That Matter to Big Firms More Than Where You Went to Law School: Why the Law School You Went to Ultimately Does Not Matter as Much as You Think It Does to Major Law Firms](#)

2. Don't narrow your options.

I went to law school with the specific ambition of becoming an environmental lawyer, and thus chose a school based almost solely on their environmental law program, without taking the rest of their specialty areas into consideration. For someone who didn't know what a tort was on the first day of classes, this was a mistake. You may surprise yourself by falling completely in love with a different area of law, so choose a school that is well-rounded in its program areas.

3. Go to school where you want to live.

Don't pick a law school based on where you think it would be fun to live for the three-year period, but think further into the future. Do you know you'll want to move somewhere specific when school is over? Going to school in that same city, or at least state, can make a world of difference when it comes to networking for jobs as well as studying for the bar exam since most states have their own, independent exams.

4. Some schools offer travel stipends.

Are you avoiding certain schools because you don't think you'd even be able to afford a visit? Personally, I put three different schools out of mind when I realized how much it would cost me to visit them from my undergrad. What I wish I'd known is many law schools offer travel stipends for accepted students to offset the cost of visiting.

5. It's okay to take a year, or two, before you apply to law school.

This is one I definitely wish I'd thought about. It just sounded easier to go straight to law school, but once I got there I realized the value in having taken a year or two to work at a law firm in a different capacity, save up money, or just get some real world experience. This can teach you if a certain area of law is right for you, or even whether or not you enjoy practicing law enough to make the investment of money and time in law school.

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