PREPARING FOR LAW SCHOOL: 7 WAYS TO DEVELOP YOUR PROFESSIONAL IMAGE
If you’re reading this, you have likely already made the choice to embark on an immensely rewarding intellectual experience. You want a degree that can open doors to endless career possibilities, and you’re ready to invest in your future. **You’ve decided to go to law school.**

Congratulations on your decision. It’s one that will have a lasting impact on the rest of your life—and whatever your legal aspirations, you’re in for a challenging, gratifying journey to a Juris Doctor degree. So what now? Researching programs and choosing where to apply are the logical next steps, but before you select the right school for you, there are several things you need to do to make yourself a competitive candidate.

After all, the Law School Admission Council (LSAC) reported that 33,229 LSATs were administered in October 2015 alone. You’re up against thousands of other prospective students, so why not put your best foot forward? **It’s time to perfect your professional image.**

If you’re serious about law school, now is the time to transition your thinking to that of a law student. Admissions teams want to feel confident about who they admit, and projecting a professional image that you can back up is crucial in getting their approval.

Want some help? The Admissions team at Syracuse University College of Law whittled that list of essential must-dos down to the seven most important steps—which we assigned to three categories: how to act the part, look the part, and talk the part of a law student. And because we genuinely want to see more law students succeed, we’re sharing those steps with you now.

**Let’s get started.**
Part of perfecting your professional image is having your act together. Ideal law school candidates are prepared to apply, eager to learn, and equipped with transferable skills and experiences. Here’s where to start:

1

**TAKE THE TEST**

To apply to any law school, you first need to register with the Law School Admission Council and then take the LSAT. The test is scored on a scale of 120 to 180, with 152 being the average. If you feel strongly that your score doesn’t best depict your capabilities, you can retest—but know that law schools will see your complete test record. Your best bet: Study hard and take it when you’re ready.
GET YOUR APPLICATION IN TOP-NOTCH SHAPE

Obtaining your transcripts and completing the application is the easy part. Next, focus on penning an impeccable personal statement and securing up to three strong letters of recommendation. Not sure who to ask, or how? See our blog post on exactly this topic.

FIVE QUICK PERSONAL STATEMENT TIPS:

1. Choose a specific topic that you can easily and enjoyably write about.

2. Be genuine. Don’t exaggerate or use vocabulary you think Admissions wants to hear; use your own.

3. Be energetic. Use the active voice and keep it interesting.

4. Don’t repeat anything that can be read in your resume.

5. Proofread and have others proofread for you too.

BE SURE YOU HAVE THE RIGHT EXPERIENCE, KNOWLEDGE, AND SKILLS TO JUSTIFY YOUR ADMITTANCE

While no specific undergraduate majors or courses are required in order for you to enroll in law school, Admissions committees want to see that you’ve done some homework. Polish your skills—everything from critical thinking to writing—and have a fundamental understanding of economics, political thought, and history. It’s great if your prelaw track includes hands-on experience like interning at a law firm or shadowing a lawyer. But if it doesn’t, discuss your leadership skills, work experience, or volunteer activities and how these have prepared you for the rigors of law school.

HONE YOUR SKILLS IN:

- Analytical reading
- Problem solving
- Writing
- Communication
- Organization
- Research
CLEAN UP YOUR DIGITAL FOOTPRINT

Search for yourself on Google. Do photos or content come up that you’d rather an Admissions officer or future employer not see? Ask the site administrator or poster to remove anything unprofessional. (Google has a few tips and tools to help you manage your online reputation.) Next, assess your social media presence. Use our checklist on the right as a starting point.

YOUR SOCIAL MEDIA CHECKLIST

If your Facebook privacy settings aren’t locked up tight, go through your posts and photos and delete anything inappropriate.

Change your LinkedIn profile photo to a professional headshot, if it isn’t already, and update your work experience.

Are you on Twitter? Delete any tweets or retweets on your stream that you wouldn’t want a potential employer or Admissions officer to read.

Do any of your inactive social profiles show up in a Google search? Consider deleting your account if you no longer use that platform.
BUTTON UP YOUR PRESENTATION

This may sound obvious—and as a college graduate, something you already know—but it bears repeating: Look put together. A brand starts with a good first impression, and from campus visits to informational sessions, the last thing you want is to be memorable for a negative reason. Plus, how you carry yourself can either exude confidence or the lack of it.

When it’s time for an interview with Admissions

Make a list
Prepare questions ahead of time

Dress professionally

Practice a firm handshake

Arrive 15 minutes early

Stand up straight

Avoid distractions

Be organized
The last component of refining your professional image involves how you talk and what you’re able to talk about. No matter what field of law interests you, you’ll be speaking for a living—whether it’s to clients, to judges, to diplomats, or to CFOs. Show Admissions you can communicate well.

**LEARN HOW TO ENGAGE**

Great lawyers speak with conviction and articulately get their point across. They’re coherent, persuasive, and prepared to respond to curveballs. If your public speaking skills need improvement, we encourage you to take a class or work with a public speaking coach. These skills will come through in your interview and will be invaluable in your career.
HAVE SOMETHING TO SAY

By this, we mean prepare for any conversations you may have throughout the Admissions process—with interviewers, alumni, mentors, and other prospective students at events, and so forth. In any of these situations, your goal is to be able to participate in a discussion on anything from the news to your legal experiences to the programs you’re interested in. Reading the newspaper (or online news) is a great way to stay current.

How to give a great interview

- Brainstorm, but don’t rehearse. Your conversation should feel natural.
- Go off-resume.
- Talk up the unique aspects of the school that drew you there in the first place.
- Show that you researched alumni and know where they’ve ended up.
- Be compelling, offering a few reasons why this is the best school for you.
In the interest of time—because you now have quite a bit of work to do—we’ll keep our closing argument short. If law school is in your future, and you cannot wait for the day you sit in on your first deposition, it’s essential to start thinking like a law student and a lawyer as early as possible.

We hope you found this eBook helpful in getting you started, and we also hope you’ll consider Syracuse Law. From our world-class faculty and unique programs to our dedicated alumni network, it’s the ideal place to hone your professional image and set yourself up for a successful career in law. In fact, why not schedule a visit?

**CONTACT ADMISSIONS**

Talk directly with the Syracuse Law Admissions team.

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Within one of the world’s great universities ... Transform your thinking. Transform your future. Dineen Hall, our radically, reimagined 21st-century law school environment, symbolizes Syracuse Law’s global, entrepreneurial, future-oriented legal education.

To study the law is to join the ranks of some of the best minds in history—leaders, idealists, inventors, entrepreneurs, dreamers, agents of change, heroes.

From big law firms to solo practices; from clerkships to public advocacy; from international banking to Capitol Hill to pharmaceutical companies or major brands: The knowledge, practice, and networking experience you gain here combine to create an incomparable education designed to endure.

That’s the Power of Orange.