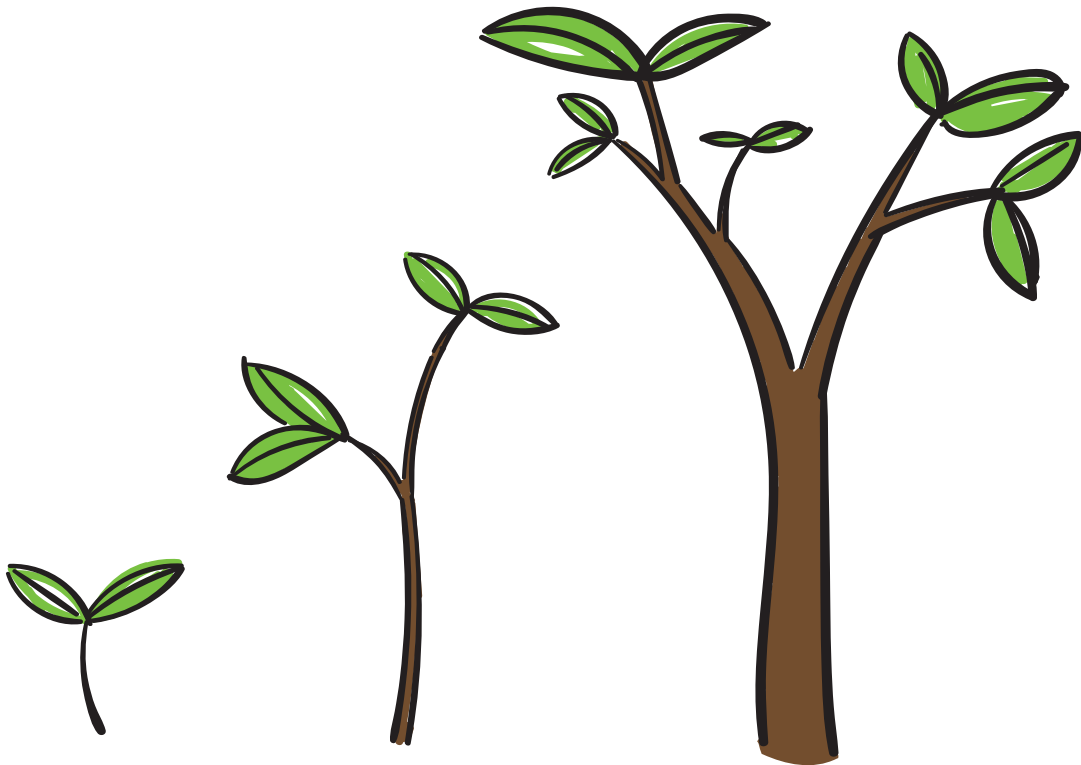


Getting Started on The LSAT



A Complete Guide To Prepping The Right
Way From Lawschooli.com

By Joshua Craven and Evan Jones

If you are new to the LSAT, welcome! This is a great place to start...

This is a complete guide with everything you need to know to get started prepping for the LSAT. Here, we try to include a bunch of resources from our blog that will help orient you and get you on the path to LSAT success. Before we talk about how to get you started prepping right for the LSAT, here's a brief introduction to us:

Lawschooli.com -- Joshua Craven and Evan Jones

Evan and I met 1L year of law school at University of Chicago. After graduating, we both decided we weren't all that into the practice of law, so we fled to start our own business handling marketing for big city plastic surgeons.

However, we haven't fully forgot about the law school world. We both really liked the LSAT. I know that sounds



Josh (left) and Evan in front of our law school at the University of Chicago.

strange, but it's a really impressive test. It makes the other standardized tests seem laughably easy. We both managed to hit a high score on the LSAT. [I got a 177, a 99.8th percentile score.](#) Evan got a 173, a 99th percentile score. However, we both put in a lot of hard work on it to get there.

I attacked the LSAT in a more organized and methodical way than I had done with anything up until then (or frankly, anything since). Still, it was a pain doing it because I had to wade through a sea of junk information before I could find a consensus on legitimate strategies for prepping. I didn't know how long I might need

to study or which techniques were considered the best, or the million other little tips that can come in handy. To figure it out, I had to listen to 10,000 trolls on the forums. I also ended up just buying every resource that was out there because I didn't know what was what. It was expensive and most of it turned out to be garbage that just ended up in the trash.

We are hoping you don't have to go through all that. To that end, we offer free, unbiased, expert advice about prepping for the LSAT (and also getting into the best law school at the best price).

We stay up on developments on the LSAT and all our advice is either what worked for us or something we have carefully examined. Evan is also a former LSAT tutor and classroom instructor, so he brings all that experience to the table.

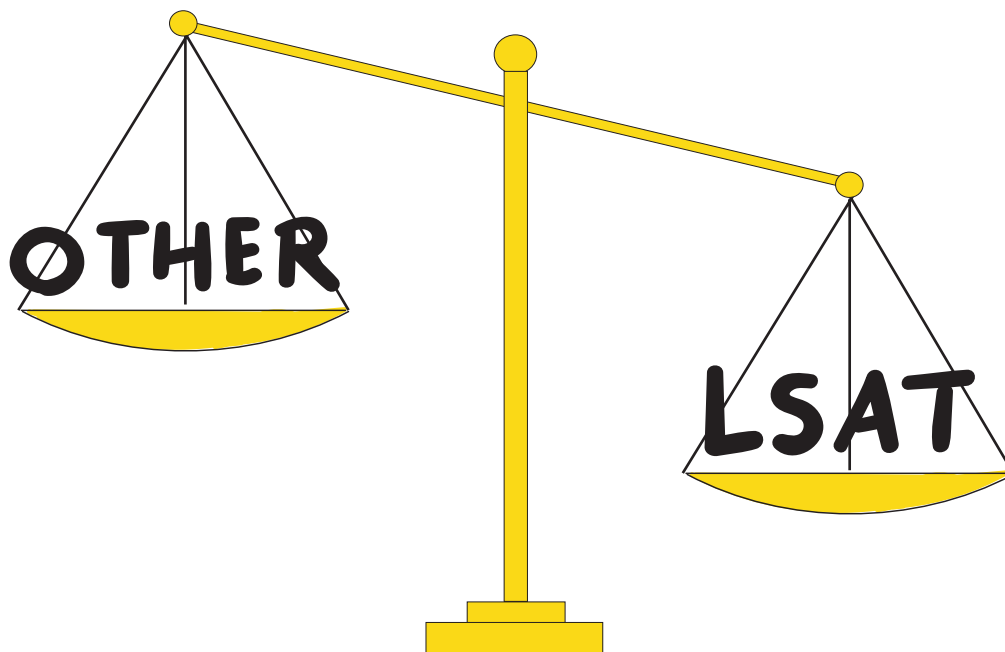
We are also here to help you personally. If you have any question about the LSAT, any question at all, just ask in the comments to any post. We'll get back to you quickly.

The LSAT

The LSAT, like I said, is a daunting. People often say that law school is like a series of hoops you have to jump through, and the LSAT is the first hoop. To my mind, that belies the importance of this test. Law school is probably better thought of as a big tournament style competition, and the LSAT is your first battle. While it's the first, it might also be the most important: the LSAT is the primary tool schools use to sort through potential students. Whether you like it or not, you are being compared with the other candidates. Those who do the best on the LSAT are going to have the best options.

The name, the Law School Admission Test, is truly appropriate. This is the test that essentially determines where you will be admitted to law school. If you lump all the other factors that determine admission together, they aren't even close to half so important as the LSAT taken alone.

Picture a scale, and on one side of the scale you've got the LSAT, and on the other side you have all the other factors: GPA, where you went for undergrad, your work experience, etc. The scale isn't just tipped towards the LSAT, the LSAT side is so heavy it's nearly touching. On average, LSAT alone probably decides up to 75% of whether you get into a given law school.



Basically, the LSATs importance can't be overstated. If you decide to take the test, you should be ready to devote yourself wholly to it. Practice intensely and you won't have to worry whether you are doing enough.

The hard work will pay off. The LSAT is not, strictly speaking, an intelligence test. Skill at taking the LSAT can actually increase significantly through preparation and practice. Just because it's not a test of memorized facts does not mean you can't improve at it. It might be best thought of as a mental sport, like chess. Actually, it's kind of a lot like I imagine karate might be, though I've never done karate myself. You have to learn the moves, then you have to practice like crazy to perfect them.

Your LSAT score is not already engraved somewhere from the time of your birth waiting for a magical sorting hat to tell law schools what it is. Study hard (like we suggest) and you will be surprised how high your score goes.

Now, let's answer some beginner LSAT FAQs and get you pointed in the right direction. You might want to skim over this next section if you are familiar with the test structure already.

What is the LSAT?

The LSAT is a standardized exam that tests skills considered fundamental to success in law school. The test contains five 35-minute sections of multiple-choice questions. The scored sections will consist of two logical reasoning passages, one analytical reasoning section (more commonly called "logic games") and one reading comprehension section. There is also one additional section which is not scored, called the "experimental section." It might be anyone of the three section types. While you can sometimes deduce after the test which section is the experimental, it's not possible to tell which is the experimental during the test (at least not without violating the test rules and risking serious consequences).

[Logical reasoning](#) sections consist of approximately 25 short passages with a single question about each passage. You are asked to analyze the logic contained in the passage. For example you may have to find a flaw in the author's reasoning or determine an assumption on which the author relies.

[Logic games](#) sections consist of four games, with five to eight questions about each game. You have a group of variables, like maybe seven scientists for example, and you are asked to put them in order or place them in to different groups according to special rules that the game provides. This section is often the hardest when you start out, but don't worry, it's also the easiest to master. It's likely you will find that you even come to like doing games. They are far less boring than the next section type...

[Reading comprehension](#) sections have four longer reading passages with five to eight questions per passage. You are asked to perform certain tasks to analyze the passage, such as determine what the main point of the passage is, or find some support for a conclusion within the passage.

To see what each kind of question looks like, [click here to find real LSAT sample questions](#). That includes a link to two full free sample LSAT practice tests.

How Long Do You Have To Study For The LSAT?

While there isn't exactly a consensus on how long you should prep, there is a consensus on what you should do to prepare. First, you need to learn the correct strategies for attacking the LSAT. That can take anywhere between a month and three months or more, depending on your time commitment and how naturally the concepts come to you. Then, you should do just about [every single real LSAT practice question available](#). There are currently 60 published LSAT practice tests, totaling about 6,000 LSAT questions (there are also 10 out of print LSATs available in case you need a little extra practice. Find them here: <http://lawschooli.com/where-can-i-find-every-actual-official-lsat-preptest/>).

Altogether, it usually takes about a minimum three months to do this without studying so much that it's uncomfortable. You may need to study substantially longer if you have a lot of other life commitments to juggle. For a more thorough discussion of the nuances here, see our post on how long you should study for the LSAT.

Where Can I Find A Good Prep Schedule?

You are going to see the most success on the LSAT if you set yourself a schedule and follow it faithfully. Like we said, [three months](#) is about the minimum required to do it right. To help take the thinking out of what you need to do and when, we've carefully prepared Day By Day LSAT schedules of various lengths:

[10-Week LSAT Study Schedule](#) | [12-Week LSAT Study Schedule](#)
[14-Week LSAT Study Schedule](#) | [16-Week LSAT Study Schedule](#)

These track what Evan and I both did (minus the unhelpful stuff) to prepare correctly and get great scores on the first try.

[CLICK HERE TO CHECK OUT THE](#)



[12-WEEK DAY BY DAY SCHEDULE](#)

Our whole spiel is that most people don't do NEARLY prepare enough for this test. They end up regretting it and have to take the test again, or just give up. There is no reason to be a part of this group. Only start studying when you are sure you have the time to study. If you aren't able to study enough, you should delay and take it when you have properly prepared. There's simply no legitimate reason to take this test when you're not ready.

Studying for a retake is often tough because you will have seen a lot of the practice questions before. It's also very difficult psychologically to overcome a poor effort the first time around. Don't mess around with that. Study right the first time. To get you in the right frame of mind, let me give you this: This is Evan's post on [5 HARSH TRUTHS THAT WILL MAKE YOU BETTER AT THE LSAT](#). There, along with some Zoolander photos, you'll get a major LSAT wake up call. If you are ever slacking, just go back to that post.

Should I Take A Prep Course Or Self-Study?

This is the hundred dollar question that everyone asks at the beginning of their prep. It might comfort you to know that both strategies work fine, and plenty of high scorers come from either group. Evan and I both self-studied. If you can self-motivate, it's a perfectly effective strategy. It may even be slightly favored among the high scorers. Anecdotally, it seems the majority of students at top 6 schools were self-studiers.

I don't think this is because [self-study](#) is necessarily more effective, but rather that those who end up with high scores tend to be real self-starters, properly set a rigorous program for themselves, and follow it through. Even if you take a prep class, you should emulate that attitude. A ton of prep classes don't assign you enough work to really max out your score on the LSAT. [Read that 5 Harsh Truths post](#) and you'll know more about how to get it done on your own even if you take a prep course.

When you go with a [prep course](#), you now have the further option of online vs. in-class. I personally like online courses. They are cheaper and you don't have to make the commitment to travel to your class. Most of us are busy and that travel time might be better applied to just studying, especially if you are working a job during your prep.

The other big benefit to online learning is that you can re-watch lessons. I think hearing these concepts once is often just not enough to get them to sink in. Being able to locate the lecture where you learned something and re-watch it as needed is invaluable.

The only downside is that you might have trouble staying on task without someone checking in on you a little. However, I'm wary of relying on that to begin with. Your whole LSAT experience can tell you a lot about whether you really want this. If you are having trouble motivating to study, that might be a good indication that this isn't for you.

[The Best LSAT Prep Courses](#)

LSAT prep classes are also not all created equal. The common advice, which we support, is to stay away from the huge companies that aren't LSAT specialists. That includes Kaplan and Princeton review. These companies gave up on making innovative LSAT material years ago. Now, they just spend all their money (and your money if you support them) on papering the Internet with ads. While a fraction of their advice is passably okay, much of it is garbage, and you won't be in position to know what is what. Stick with companies that care about the LSAT and devote themselves to making great techniques. Strangely, the better companies are usually cheaper, because they don't have a huge sales apparatus in place.

The following are well-regarded companies that I know have rock-solid methods for attacking the LSAT: Powerscore, Blueprint, and 7 sage. Manhattan LSAT also has a good reputation, but I have yet to familiarize myself with their strategies. Although I can't vouch for them personally, they may be worth checking out.

Starting Out Your Prep

Should I Take A Cold Diagnostic?

We are of the opinion that it's useful to start your prep with a "[cold diagnostic](#)" exam. A "cold diagnostic" is a real LSAT practice test that you take with no prior study. You do this to give yourself a starting point to measure your progress. [Here's how to take a cold diagnostic.](#)

What Section Should I Starting Learning First?

[Logic games](#) is a natural starting point. It's got the steepest learning curve, so you generally want to be spending time with it over the full 3+ months that you are studying for the LSAT. If you are working with [Mike Kim's LSAT Trainer](#) to begin with (as we recommend in our premium schedules) you'll be doing a combination of LR and LG to start off.

[Choosing LSAT Prep Books](#)

For the self-studiers, there are really only a [few books out there that set the gold standard for LSAT prep](#). These books all use real LSAT questions to teach you how to do, well, real LSAT questions. Inferior books often use fake questions that don't contain the nuances of real LSAT questions. Avoid studying from these books at all costs.

The resource that we most heavily recommend you start of with is [The LSAT Trainer™](#), a [comprehensive prep book created by Mike Kim](#), a test prep expert who for years created Manhattan LSAT's teaching material. It's the [only book that by itself could be enough to adequately prep](#) you for all three section types found on the LSAT. [It's big: over 600 pages of dense material](#), so the one book adds up to just as much instruction, drills, etc. as you get from our other recommendation, the Powerscore Bible Series.

The Best LSAT Prep Books - The LSAT Trainer

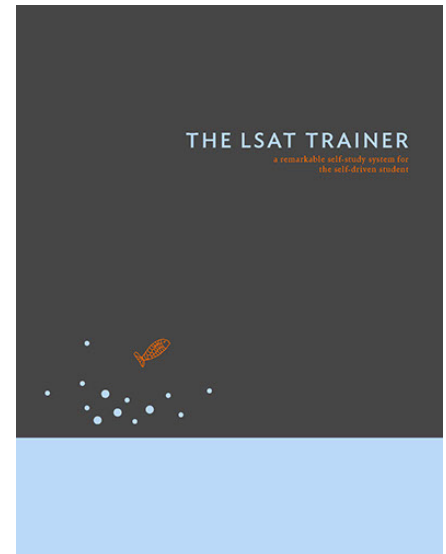
[Mike Kim's The LSAT Trainer: A Remarkable Study System For The Self-Driven Student](#)

Published: 2013

Pages: 600

Our Review: 10 out of 10

Amazon Review: 5 Stars (Based on 41 Reviews)



While this book would be sufficient in of itself to prep you for the LSAT, it's a perfectly viable strategy to use multiple books to study. Doing so will present you with choices to make about which strategies to employ (particularly on games, where different books will use different methods of diagramming the problems). However, for many students the process of navigating these choices helps reinforce their understanding of the LSAT and spurs improvement. The majority of high-scoring self-studiers currently employ this multiple book approach.

If you go this route, the next weapon in your arsenal should be the well-known [Powerscore™ Logic Games Bible](#). This book has been the favorite of high-scorers for years, and remains as relevant as ever. The methods for diagramming games are fast and effective. These are the strategies Evan and I used to destroy the logic games section on the LSAT (I got none wrong, Evan got only one point wrong).

The Best LSAT Prep Books - The Powerscore Logic Games Bible

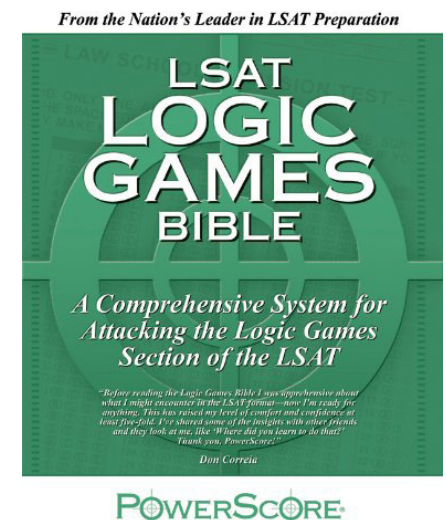
[The PowerScore LSAT Logic Games Bible: A Comprehensive System for Attacking The Logic Games Section of The LSAT](#)

Published: 2014 (Revised 2014 Edition)

Pages: 630

Our Review: 10 out of 10

Amazon Review: 4.5 Stars (Based on 256 Reviews)



Again, the [LSAT Trainer](#) will do a terrific job covering the LSAT logical reasoning section. However, if you are struggling with logical reasoning it's generally helpful to hear what any intelligent expert has to say on it. You never know what piece of advice is going to stick. In that spirit, I definitely recommend at least having the [PowerScore Logical Reasoning Bible](#) in reserve to help you on question types that you find difficult. While the ordering of lessons in the book doesn't necessarily make a whole lot of sense, the book does give you great strategies for each individual question types. It's an invaluable reference.

The Best LSAT Prep Books - The PowerScore Logical Reasoning Bible

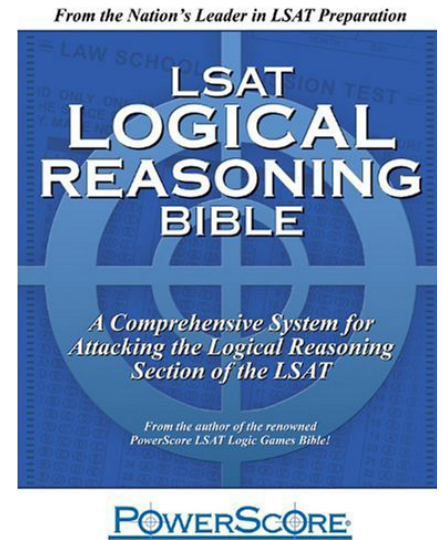
[The PowerScore LSAT Logical Reasoning Bible: A Comprehensive System for Attacking The Logical Reasoning Section of The LSAT](#)

Published: 2014 (Revised 2014 Edition)

Pages: 654

Our Review: 9.8 out of 10

Amazon Review: 4.5 Stars (Based on 141 Reviews)



A common question I get is people wondering if they should buy these books even if they are learning from another prep company's prep course. Well, if you are studying with Kaplan or Princeton Review, then yes, definitely, you should switch over to these techniques. I also think the [LSAT Trainer](#) is a great buy no matter what you are working with. The 7Sage founder, J.Y. Ping, recommends it to all his students for a reason. Say you are working with an LSAT Prep Course and the [Trainer](#), in that case, the Powerscore books might be best kept in reserve. However, if one companies strategy isn't working so well for you after a lot of time with it, it might be worth investigating whether the another works better for you. You can mix and match strategies as long as you are consistent in applying one strategy to each type of rule you encounter (if that doesn't make sense now, trust me, it will after you have started studying).

[LSAT Question Explanations](#)

A lot of people like to use [LSAT explanations](#) to questions to bolster their study. It's great when you are stuck and just can't see a solution.

I'm okay with you using if you satisfy two conditions: First, you have to do the questions on you own first. Second, you have to thoroughly review them yourself to see if you can reach the correct answer on your own. From there, the explanations will help you make corrections in your thinking process and will help you apply the strategies you have learned correctly. Note that how you review LSAT questions is one of the most important elements of your LSAT prep. We have a long lesson on how to do this right, so bookmark this:

Here is a full post where we discuss some of the [best LSAT explanations](#) currently available. Remember that the actual preptests often come with these explanations, so try to avoid buying the same preptest twice. If you have already purchased a [preptest](#), there are explanations that come separate so you don't double pay. I recommend [Graeme Blake's Hacking The LSAT Series](#) for this. Find it here: <http://lawschooli.com/best-lsat-explanations/>

Learning Good Logical Reasoning Strategies

My biggest problem with LSAT prep companies is that they tend to under-emphasize the most important part of learning logical reasoning, the “logic” part. You have to know [basic logic for the LSAT](#) cold in order to progress on the logical reasoning section. Evan tells me that as a tutor his biggest pet peeve was running into people a month or more into their study who didn’t have conditional logic down. You MUST know the [conditional logic](#) better than you know your own mother if you hope to do well on the [LSAT logical reasoning](#) section.

I’m sorry if I scared you with that rant, but people could avoid a lot of problems if they get this down. Regardless of what you are using to prep, make sure that you are focused on mastering conditional logic from the get go. We have a completely free conditional reasoning lesson here to get you started. Start with that, and you’ll be laying the proper foundation necessary to master the LSAT logical reasoning section quickly.

Learning Reading Comprehension

There is a little less mystery to the good ways to approach the [reading comprehension section of the LSAT](#). For a whole lot of people, it’s going to just come naturally. For the rest of takers, the best way to approach it is often to learn some strategies, then apply brute force: just doing a ton of these sections will help you familiarize yourself with the kinds of questions they ask, and will build you working memory and speed.


The book we recommend for learning strategies is the [The Powerscore™ Reading Comprehension Bible](#). Their approach can be useful if you aren’t progressing steadily through practice alone.

Putting It Together: Posts For Tips And Strategy

Once you are started on the path to LSAT mastery, there are tons of tips that can help you fine tune your approach. Search google and it’s likely you’ll find a post from us that will help you with what you need. Check back on the blog frequently and sign up for our e-mailed LSAT tips to be sure you don’t miss future tips.

We’ll be there to help you with every step on your way to LSAT glory, so consult us whenever you need to on the site, on twitter, or on facebook.

Best,



Joshua A. Craven