

LSAT[®]
FOR
DUMMIES[®]
A Wiley Brand

2nd Edition

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FOR
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A Wiley Brand

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Introduction

Welcome to *LSAT For Dummies*, 2nd Edition! You may have heard horror stories about the Law School Admission Test (LSAT), especially about the infamous “logic games.” Yes, the LSAT is no walk in the park, but it's not the hardest test in the universe. It doesn't require you to brush off your math and science texts from high school, and it doesn't expect you to remember anything from your history classes. It really just expects you to be able to read and analyze. If you can read carefully and quickly and then apply what you've read, you already have the skills you need to succeed on the LSAT.

This book helps you refine those skills and apply them to the particular tasks on the LSAT. If you go through this book and work through a healthy number of practice questions, you should have a good idea of what awaits you on test day.

About This Book

First, allow us to tell you what this book *can* do: This book introduces you to the LSAT and helps you get a handle on how to take it. It describes the three types of multiple-choice sections — analytical reasoning, logical reasoning, and reading comprehension — and provides guidance on how to handle them, with plenty of practice questions and explanations. It also touches on the writing sample, which is unscored but still merits a bit of attention. The first three chapters discuss some basics of law school admissions, test-taking strategy, and other logistical entertainment.

On to what the book *can't* do: This book doesn't give you a bunch of tricks to help you “crack” the LSAT. The LSAT isn't a nut; it's a test, and to do well on it you have to apply your natural intelligence and experience. We give you plenty of advice on how to approach each question type to maximize your talents and train your mind to think in the most effective way.

Included in this book are three full-length practice tests, which you can use to try out the tips and techniques we provide throughout the chapters. The difficulty levels and thought patterns on the practice tests are similar to those on real LSATs. Actual LSAT test-prep instructors and LSAT-takers assisted us by massaging and tweaking the questions to make sure that they're equivalent to the real LSAT questions. You can get real and valuable practice by using the questions in this book. But the fact is, no one makes real LSAT questions but the real Law School Admission Council (LSAC). If you want real LSAT questions, get yourself some LSAT PrepTests, which are real LSATs administered in previous years. That's the most authentic practice you can find, and we highly recommend it. (You can order these PrepTests from the LSAC website: www.lsac.org. They come with answers but not explanations, so they're great practice, but to figure out why your answers are right or wrong, you should work through this book first to get a sense of how the questions work.)

As for conventions, here are a couple you should be aware of:

- ✓ Websites and e-mail addresses are styled in monofont to help them stand out in the text.
- ✓ Any new LSAT-related terms that you're likely to be unfamiliar with appear first in *italics*.

Because this book is a test-prep, you probably want to read most everything here. Besides, we worked really hard on this book! However, if you're pressed for time or just have a short attention span, you can skip the sidebars and any text marked with a Technical Stuff icon without missing out on too much.

Foolish Assumptions

We make a few assumptions about you, the reader (we hope you don't mind):

- ✓ Call us crazy, but we're guessing you've signed up to take the LSAT or you're at least seriously considering taking the LSAT.
- ✓ We know, of course, that you're not a dummy. You've likely received or are in the process of receiving an undergraduate degree and are no stranger to thinking analytically. You simply need guidance regarding how to apply your already sharp skills to the unfamiliar question types on the LSAT.
- ✓ Our third and final assumption is that you've chosen this book for one of several reasons — the fabulous *For Dummies* reputation for providing information in an easily accessible format, the price, or the attention-grabbing yellow-and-black cover — but primarily because you think you want to go to law school, and the LSAT is the only way to that destination.

Icons Used in This Book

This book, like all *For Dummies* books, uses icons to help you spot important tidbits of information and break up the monotony of otherwise plain and ordinary pages. Here are the icons you'll encounter in this book:



This icon marks useful bits of information that may come in handy when you study for or take the LSAT.



This icon reminds you of valuable strategies to keep in mind as you work through the test content.



This icon marks stuff to avoid, potential mistakes, and traps for the unwary.



This icon identifies practice questions that demonstrate how to apply specific techniques.



This icon highlights extra tidbits of info that enhance your reading but aren't essential to preparing for the LSAT.

Beyond the Book

By now we're hoping that you're impressed with the wealth of content contained in this book. But to quote your favorite infomercials: Wait! There's more!

In addition to everything you see before you, the following nuggets of LSAT gold are available online:

- ✓ **Cheat Sheet** (www.dummies.com/cheatsheet/lsat): Check out the Cheat Sheet for helpful tips on maximizing your test-taking experience with reminders of what to take with you to the test and summaries of

the approaches to each of the three counted question types and the written essay.

✓ **Dummies.com online articles**

(www.dummies.com/extras/lsat): Each part in this book is supplemented by a relevant online article that provides additional tips and techniques related to the subject of that part. Read helpful tidbits that reveal an alternative approach to reading passages, define important logical reasoning terms, detail a strategy for a specific logic game question type, and outline a few grammar rules for writing the essay.

Where to Go from Here

If you bought this book, you must have some plan — definite or tentative — to take the LSAT. But just buying the book alone won't help you much. To get the full benefit, you have to open it up, read it, and work the problems.

There are two approaches you can take:

- ✓ Read all the explanatory materials, work your way through all the practice problems, and then take the practice tests at the end and see how you did.
- ✓ Take one of the full-length tests to see how well you do. Score your test. Then study the sections that give you the most trouble, concentrating on the questions you find difficult.

It's up to you. You're the one taking the test, and you're the one who has to decide what you need to study and how much time you want to allocate to the process.

Part I

Getting Started with the LSAT



For Dummies can help you get started with lots of subjects. Visit www.dummies.com to learn more and do more with *For Dummies*.

In this part...

- ✓ Gain insight into the minds that create the LSAT.
- ✓ Learn tips for managing the LSAT and each of its question types.
- ✓ Be prepared for exam day by knowing exactly what and what not to bring to the testing site.
- ✓ Discover other important considerations for getting into your top-choice law school.

Chapter 1

The L Team: The LSAT and Its Administrators

In This Chapter

- ▶ Exploring the various sections of the LSAT
 - ▶ Understanding the LSAT scoring system
 - ▶ Knowing how and when to register for the LSAT
 - ▶ Studying for the LSAT
 - ▶ Meeting the LSAC
-

If you want to go to law school, you must take the *Law School Admission Test*, a.k.a. the LSAT. The more than 200 law schools that belong to the Law School Admission Council (LSAC) require it (see the later section “[What Have You Done for Me Lately? The LSAC](#)” for info about the LSAC). Law schools that don't require it may not be approved by the American Bar Association (ABA), which in turn may not qualify you for admission to a state bar, so be careful about choosing a school that doesn't require the LSAT.

The LSAT, annoying though it can be, is the only means law schools have of evaluating all their applicants on the same playing field. Colleges are different, backgrounds are different, and cultures are different, but the LSAT is the same for everyone. The LSAT is carefully designed so that the testing experience of test-takers is virtually identical. Everyone has the same time per section, the same rules, and the same testing environment. And each

LSAT test is crafted so that test-takers have a 90 percent chance of scoring the same on a different version. So, law schools feel confident that the LSAT is an objective measure of student ability.

Grade point averages, unlike the LSAT, are highly subjective; they vary depending on the difficulty of a school, the difficulty of particular courses, and other random and unpredictable factors (like the grading policies of individual professors). Law school applications include other information like personal statements that can give schools an idea of a student's abilities, but the schools still can't know for sure that they're getting the real goods — plenty of students get help writing those essays. That leaves the LSAT as one of the most reliable and objective means to compare candidates.

In this chapter, you get an introduction to the LSAT and its various parts and learn all about registering and preparing for the big day. You also get a peek at the organization behind all this madness, the LSAC.



If you're going to be a lawyer, you have to get used to disclaimers, and here's ours for this chapter. The technical information we offer about fees and procedures is subject to change, so refer to the official website (www.lsac.org) to verify the facts and figures for yourself.

Getting to Know the Enemy

If you want to get a decent score on the LSAT, you need to know the test. You can't expect to walk into a test

center cold, never having encountered an LSAT in your life, and just ace the questions.

You don't necessarily have to study for a long time. If you're good at standardized tests, you may be able to flip through one or two sample tests, work a few of the problems, get the idea, and score in the 95th percentile. Some people can. If, on the other hand, you find standardized tests generally challenging, and the LSAT difficult in particular, you probably need to devote yourself to more practice time to master the proven strategies provided by this book. Whatever your situation, keep motivated and prepare with the certainty that you can and will improve with dedicated practice.

The LSAT consists of four parts:

- ✓ Analytical reasoning section
- ✓ Logical reasoning section
- ✓ Reading comprehension section
- ✓ Writing sample section

The writing sample section is the only section that isn't multiple choice, and it's always last. The other three multiple-choice sections can come in any order. You take six separate test sections: two scored sections of logical reasoning, one scored analytical reasoning section, one scored reading comprehension section, one writing sample, and one unscored section that can be any of the three multiple-choice sections. You don't know which section is unscored, and the unscored section looks just like any other LSAT test section. Every section lasts 35 minutes.



The unscored section that you take is a collection of questions that the LSAC is considering using on a future LSAT. The LSAC wants to see how well these new questions work when presented to actual LSAT-takers. This section can be analytical reasoning, logical reasoning, or reading comprehension; you don't know which section is unscored.



The quickest way to get your hands on an actual LSAT is to download the free sample test available at the LSAC website (www.lsac.org). Downloading the sample is a good way to familiarize yourself with the test and its format.

Taking a Quick Look at the Types of Questions

The LSAT has three different kinds of multiple-choice questions and an unscored written essay. Each questions type has its own virtues and vices, and you'll come to know and love them all (though we won't blame you if you pick a favorite).

Analytical reasoning — playing games with your head

The analytical reasoning section consists of four logic problems — the infamous “logic games” — each of which is followed by between five and eight questions. These games involve a group of players (or game pieces) that you need to arrange or assign and the rules that govern how you go about it.

You may get something like: “Five college students — B, C, D, E, and F — must share three rooms in a house. B can't stay with D. E must stay with F.” This fact pattern is followed by several questions that allow you to explore your understanding of the relationships between the students and the dorm rooms. One question may propose five possible roommate arrangements and ask you to choose which one is the only one that could work.

This kind of puzzle commonly appears on IQ tests or in books of games to amuse travelers on airplanes. What they have to do with law school is a mystery to many people. The LSAC PrepTest booklets say that these types of problems “simulate the kinds of detailed analyses of relationships that a law student must perform in solving legal problems.” And it's true that the skills the analytical reasoning section tests are important in law school. To answer these questions correctly, you must read carefully and accurately. You have to apply rules to a system, which is similar to applying statutes or case law to a problem. You have to restrict your analysis to what's directly stated or to what can be logically inferred. So the analytical reasoning section is fairly useful at predicting who might succeed in law school.

The analytical reasoning section is worth about 25 percent of your LSAT score. See Chapters [4](#) through [6](#) for more on analytical reasoning.

Logical reasoning — putting your arguing skills to good use

The logical reasoning section consists of about 25 short (for example, three or four sentences) passages about various topics. Each of them is followed by one or two questions. The questions ask you to identify the point of an argument, to make deductions about what the author

is assuming, to draw conclusions, to identify principles or argument structures, to spot logical errors, and so forth.

Most of these questions involve informal or casual logic, the kind you use to make everyday decisions. All you have to do is read carefully (and quickly) and think clearly. Sometimes the wording is tricky, and you have to concentrate to avoid getting confused. Jotting down some notes or paraphrasing the passage in your own words can help you focus.

Every LSAT has two logical reasoning sections. Together, they're worth about 50 percent of your LSAT score. Chapters [7](#) through [10](#) are full of information about logical reasoning.



Because the logical reasoning section is worth a considerable percentage of your total LSAT score, work hard on your technique for these problems. You get twice the benefit if you do well on this section!

Reading comprehension — concentrating and remembering what you read

In the reading comprehension section, you read three fairly long and one pair of shorter passages on particular topics and answer several questions about them. The questions ask about the author's conclusion, the author's tone, the meaning of words, how the passage is organized, and other points designed to test your ability to understand what you read. The good news: The LSAT uses a limited pool of question types over and over again. Because you can predict the types of questions being

asked, you can practice reading to answer the questions you know you'll see.

Topics range from humanities and science and social science disciplines to law-related writing. You don't need any expertise in any particular area; in fact, if you have expertise in the subject of a passage, try to forget your outside knowledge. You want to answer all the questions from the information given to you in the passage.

Outside knowledge may actually distract you!

This section tests your ability to read and understand a fairly long reading passage. Reading and understanding a long passage is applicable to law school because most law classes consist of reading long, densely worded passages on obscure topics and then answering questions about them.

The reading comprehension section accounts for about 25 percent of your LSAT score. See Chapters [11](#) and [12](#) for the lowdown.

The writing sample — jumping the final hurdle

The last part of the LSAT is the writing sample section. You receive one double-sided sheet of lined paper, and you get 35 minutes to write your essay on it. (Yep, that means you write it by hand.) The essay topic lets you exhibit your skills at using a set of facts to defend one course of action over another.

For example, your question may ask you to decide which dog a widow should buy: a German shepherd, which would be a good guard dog but not very affectionate, or a Pekingese, which would make a good companion but be utterly useless for home defense. (You can explore this question further in Chapter [13](#).)

Your selection doesn't matter. There's no right or wrong answer. All you have to do is pick a side and justify your decision. Chapters [13](#) and [14](#) go over this process in detail.

You don't get a score on the writing sample, but the Law School Data Assembly Service (LSDAS) sends a copy of your essay to every law school that receives your LSAT score.



Some folks wonder why they should prepare for the writing sample section if it's unscored. Law schools often read essays in deciding borderline cases or comparing similar applicants. If your profile is substantially similar to hundreds of others, law schools often look at the essays to compare like candidates.

You Gotta Score!

The LSAT is scored on a scale from 120 to 180; every year a few people attain the Everest-like peak of 180, and they can pretty much write their own tickets to law school. Although percentile charts vary slightly among test administrations, the average LSAT score is around 152. Any score higher than 160 is quite good and puts you in the top 20 percent of test-takers (80th percentile). A score of around 164 puts you around the 90th percentile, and a score of 173 or above is where the top 1 percent of test-takers usually reside.

To get a 160, you need to answer about 75 percent of the answers correctly. To get a 150, you need to answer correctly about 55 percent. If you get 95 percent or more right, your score will be up in the stratosphere, around a

175. The LSAT scoring is straightforward. Your raw score is the number of questions you get right; no points are deducted for wrong answers. You plug that raw score into the score chart to determine what your LSAT score would be. So if, say, your test has 100 questions on it, and you get 75 of them right, your raw score is 75 and your LSAT score may be 161. If you get 44 right, you'd get more like a 144. The raw score to scaled score conversion changes very slightly from test to test to account for the minor differences in difficulty of each test.



The LSAT-writers work hard to ensure that the test is reliable. That means that the same test-taker should get scores in a similar range on two or three different tests and that luck in getting an easy test shouldn't be a factor in scores. In practice, luck is always something of a factor, but it shouldn't be a major one.

Still, you've probably taken a metric ton of tests by now, and you know that everyone has good days and bad days, good tests and bad tests (hey, even good hair days and bad hair days!). The combination of a bad test and a bad mood (say, for instance, despite our advice to the contrary, you pull an all-nighter before exam day) can lead to a misleadingly bad score. If that happens, you can cancel your score and try again (see more about doing this in [Chapter 2](#)). On the other hand, you may be in the test-taking zone on test day, and every question seems laughably easy to you. It can happen that way. If you have a good day, thank your lucky stars because that'll probably result in a good LSAT score and law school admission.



What if you get a 160 and your friend gets a 163? Does that mean your friend is a better law school prospect than you? Probably not. Small differences among test-takers aren't usually due to actual differences of ability. Your score will be in the range of scores you're capable of, but if you take the LSAT several times within a short period of time, you probably won't get the same score every time. It may go up or down slightly, but it should be within 3 points up or down of your original score (though your mileage may vary).

Registering for the LSAT

The LSAT happens four times a year: in June, October, December, and February. If you want to enter law school the next fall, you should take the LSAT by the prior December, or February at the latest, though we recommend taking it earlier. October and December are the most popular test dates because some law schools start taking applications in the fall and begin accepting applicants early in the winter; the earlier you apply, the better your odds of acceptance. The October, December, and February tests are scheduled for Saturdays. The June test is on a Monday.



If you observe the Sabbath on Saturday, you can request to take the test on another day, usually the Monday following the Saturday test date. To do this, have your rabbi or minister write a letter on official stationery, confirming your religious obligations, and send it to the LSAC.

The registration fee for the LSAT is currently \$165. If you miss the first deadline and must register late, there's an additional charge of \$70. (All prices are subject to change — and likely will — so be sure to check with the LSAC to find out current charges.)

Keep the following things in mind when registering for the LSAT:

- ✓ **Be sure to register.** Okay, duh. But really, be sure to register. The deadlines for registration fall well ahead of test dates, so you need to be on the ball. You can find the deadlines on the LSAC website (www.lsac.org). Also, test centers fill up early, so you may not get into the site you want if you don't register early. If you want to go to law school in September, you most likely need to take the previous December's LSAT, which means you must register in November. Plan accordingly. And make sure you're free the day of the test!
- ✓ **When you register, be very careful to enter the correct code for your test center.** If you get the code wrong, you may be assigned a test center in a different state — not convenient. (The LSAC doesn't check for accuracy; the LSAC has no idea where you really want to take the test, so it doesn't know if you make a mistake.) Driving several hours the day before your test definitely won't calm your nerves. You can change your test center through the LSAC website for a fee, but you don't want to have to worry about that if you can avoid it.
- ✓ **Not every test center offers the LSAT on every test date.** Check to make sure that your preferred location is offering a test on your preferred date. (Occasionally, you can get the LSAC to administer a test in a different location, but only if you can't travel

to a regular site and if you register well in advance.) Safeguard your admission ticket when it arrives.

- ✓ **If something comes up — you catch the flu, you get sent overseas to war, you go into labor — and you're unable to take the LSAT, you can get a partial refund.** Granted, you get only a small portion of your registration fee back, but that's better than nothing. The LSAC website has deadlines for sending in a written request.
- ✓ **If you discover before the test date that you won't be able to make it that day, you can change your test date.** Of course, you have to pay a fee. The LSAC website has the deadlines for sending in a written request.



If you absolutely can't afford the cost of the LSAT, you can apply for a fee waiver on the LSAC website. The LSAC doesn't want to deny access to the legal profession solely on the basis of economic disadvantage. Be warned, though; the requirements are quite strict.

Preparing for the LSAT

Helping students prepare for the LSAT has become a multimillion-dollar (at least) industry. Test-prep companies promise huge score increases; students spend thousands on semester-long courses and tutors. Every major bookstore is full of books to help prospective lawyers on their way.