

# What should I do as a First-Year UW-Madison student?



Center for Pre-Law Advising  
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON

## First Year Guidelines

### 1. Explore Majors

At UW-Madison, there is neither a pre-law major nor a pre-law track. Why not? Because your classes in law school will teach you what you need to know to practice law. You should devote your undergraduate years to developing a broad base of knowledge. Take advantage of this freedom, and major in something that you will truly enjoy studying. Declare any major you want, but make every effort to do well in whichever you choose.

### 2. Consider Skill-Based Coursework

There is no requisite coursework that you should take in order to prepare for law school. Instead, the American Bar Association suggests that you focus on developing core skills and exposing yourself to broad areas of knowledge during college. See the Center for Pre-Law Advising's (CPLA) Pre-Law Coursework guide found on our website ([www.prelaw.wisc.edu](http://www.prelaw.wisc.edu)) for courses that can help you lay a strong foundation for law school in undergrad.

### 3. Get Involved

One of the benefits of attending such a large university is the opportunity to involve yourself in any one of the 800+ student organizations and/or hundreds of local volunteering opportunities. Law schools prefer students to demonstrate involvement in their communities and to take on leadership roles in those communities to the extent possible. Such involvement tends to indicate that you will be an active participant in your law school community and the community where you will practice. Academic involvement, including research with professors through the Undergraduate Research Scholars Program, is another valuable form of involvement.

### 4. Confirm an Interest in Law

You do not need to be 100% sure about your interest in the law for quite some time, but you should use your early years in college to investigate the profession of law further and to confirm your continued interest. Consider joining a pre-law student organization, take a law-related class, attend pre-law events on campus, and talk to or shadow as many attorneys as you can (family members, family friends, parents of friends, speakers at panels, etc.).

## Suggested Pre-Law Coursework

There are no prerequisite classes you need to take before applying to law school, but you should ensure you build skills in the five (5) core areas outlined below. CPLA's Coursework Guide (found at [www.prelaw.wisc.edu](http://www.prelaw.wisc.edu)) provides suggestions for coursework that could aid you in preparing for law school. See a sampling of our recommendations below (all are open to Freshmen). Keep in mind that none of these suggested courses are required.

### 1. Analytical/Problem-Solving Skills

- PHILOS 210 Reason in Communication
- ECON 101 Principles of Microeconomics
- MATH 141 Quantitative Reasoning and Problem Solving

### 2. Critical Reading/Thinking Abilities

- COUN PSY 125 A Wisconsin Experience Seminar
- ILS 200 Critical Thinking and Expression
- PHILOS 101 Introduction to Philosophy
- POLI SCI 209 Introduction to Political Theory

### 3. Writing Skills

- ENGLISH 236 Bascom Course
- HISTORY 201 The Historian's Craft

### 4. Oral Communication and Listening Abilities

- COM ARTS 100 Intro to Speech Composition
- COM ARTS 105 Public Speaking

### 5. General Knowledge

- ENGLISH 168 Introduction to Modern American Literature
- HISTORY 102 American History, Civil War Era to the Present
- INTL ST 101 Introduction to International Studies
- POLI SCI 104/184 Introduction to American Politics and Government
- PSYCH 202 Introduction to Psychology
- SOC 125 American Society: How It Really Works

### Courses for Gauging Interest in Law

- LEGAL ST/SOC 131 Criminal Justice in America
- LEGAL ST/POLI SCI 217 Law, Politics, and Society