

## Who is a Lawyer?

A lawyer is a person who, because of his or her high ethical standards and knowledge gained through education and experience, meets the requirements of a state regulatory body and receives a license to practice law in that state.

A lawyer serves both as an advocate and as an advisor. Our courts operate under an adversary system in which the parties to any case, civil or criminal, are entitled to have their positions advocated by lawyers. As officers of the court, lawyers assist in the administration of justice, while advocating their clients' positions through legal pleadings, procedures and rules of evidence, and written and oral arguments, in order to assure application of the appropriate law. As an advisor, the lawyer counsels clients in avoiding adverse legal consequences of contemplated actions, drafts documents to achieve desired results while complying with applicable laws and regulations, and advises clients about their rights and obligations in dealing with others.

In addition, a lawyer should render public interest legal service. This includes providing services at no charge or a reduced charge to persons of limited means, or to charitable or public service organizations, participating in civil activities, and taking part in projects for improving our legal system and the legal profession.

Many people think all lawyers are trial lawyers. This is the way lawyers are usually depicted in movies and on television. In reality, most lawyers spend a small part of their time in the courtroom. They consult with clients and opponents; take depositions; research legal issues; prepare contracts, deeds, title opinions and other documents; mediate and negotiate settlements; write laws; and engage in other noncourtroom activities. Areas of practice, too numerous to list, include everything from admiralty to zoning. Some lawyers work in governmental positions, teach or become judges. Others do not practice law at all; they use their legal skills while working as executives in businesses. Wide opportunities are available to anyone whose desire it is to become a lawyer.

## Why Become a Lawyer?

Many picture a lawyer as glamorous professional, financially successful and socially prominent. If this image is the main reason you want to become a

lawyer, you should reconsider. Practicing law often requires long, stressful hours of tedious work. Seldom is it glamorous. Financial success depends on the lawyer's ability to obtain business and handle it with skill, dedication, motivation, and a willingness to abandon personal endeavors in order to serve clients. Further, although a lawyer is a member of a prestigious profession, his or her social prominence depends on many factors, a number of which have nothing to do with practicing law.

If you are dedicated to assuring that the premise of "equal justice under law" continues to be the cornerstone of our legal system, do not mind hard work, are decisive, enjoy meeting challenges, have the ability to think quickly, speak with ease and authority, and are a leader, you should consider becoming a lawyer. Being a lawyer can provide you with a feeling of accomplishment, self-esteem and satisfaction that cannot be surpassed.

## How Do I Prepare for Law School?

### HIGH SCHOOL

The decision to attend law school is very important, and the preparation for law school should start as early as possible. A good general high school curriculum is important and is useful in the development of good study habits.

### COLLEGE

The American Association of Law Schools recommends a curriculum which emphasizes course work in English, speech, history, philosophy, mathematics, accounting, and social science. You should also take course work which will develop your skills in writing, communication, analysis and critical thinking. Due to the technical nature of law practice, mathematics and science classes are also helpful. It is imperative that good grades be earned. Participating in extracurricular activities which assist in developing social skills is also meaningful at this stage.

### LAW SCHOOL

The law school application process should begin about one year in advance of your expected enrollment. The two major criteria for law school admissions are one's undergraduate grade point average and scores on the law school admission test (LSAT). Other factors considered in the appli-

cation process are the college attended, major and activities, as well as the motivation and personality of the applicant.

Your first step in applying for law school should be contact with the admissions office of the school which interests you. The following law schools are in Alabama:

Cumberland School of Law  
Samford University  
800 Lakeshore Drive  
Birmingham, AL 35209

University of Alabama  
School of Law  
University of Alabama  
Tuscaloosa, AL 35486

Birmingham School of Law  
823 Frank Nelson Blvd.  
205 N. 20th Street  
Birmingham, AL 35203

Jones School of Law  
5345 Atlanta Highway  
Montgomery, AL 36109

Miles Law School  
4400 Myron Massey Blvd.  
Fairfield, AL 35064

Of those schools, the Cumberland School of Law and the University of Alabama School of Law are accredited by the American Bar Association. The graduates of all five schools can take the bar exam in Alabama, but graduation from an accredited school is a prerequisite for taking a bar exam in many other states.

## Admissions Statistics

Competition is stiff for admission to all law schools. Recent admission statistics for Alabama's accredited law schools indicate that they admit only about one-quarter of their applicants. The college grades of applicants they accept average better than 3.2 on a 4.0 scale and their LSAT scores average over 150.

