

# Pre-Law Checklist for FIRST YEARS

*Explore & Observe*

## 1. Attend at least ONE University Career Center skills-building workshop

**Why?** Getting advising support early helps you ask better questions, avoid myths, and connect with resources.

- A complete list of **Career Center** events are [posted on our website](#) and on [Heel Life](#).

## 2. Join a student organization like *Phi Alpha Delta* or *The Law Society at Carolina*

**Why?** These groups help you build confidence in public speaking, teamwork, and advocacy — all essential legal skills — in a low-stakes setting.

- You can find a list of all 1K+ student organizations on [Heel Life](#) —and remember, your activities don't need to be only with legal groups!

## 3. Conduct ONE informational interview using [Heels Engage](#), UNC's alumni database, or [LinkedIn](#).

**Why?** Talking with someone in the field gives you insight into the real-world day-to-day of legal work.

- Unsure about [networking best practices](#)? Need support in [building your LinkedIn profile](#)? Visit **The Career Center** for additional events and support!

## 4. Take a class that strengthens writing, speaking, or analytical skills

**Why?** Law schools care far more about how you think and communicate than what you major in.

- Peruse the [online course catalogue](#) and schedule an appointment with [your Academic Advisor](#) to strategize course selection for future semesters.

## 5. Sign up for the Pre-Law monthly newsletter in Handshake

**Why?** It's the easiest way to stay in the loop. You'll get curated updates on internships, events, deadlines, law school prep tips, and alumni opportunities.

- Follow the [registration steps on the Pre-Law Advising page](#) on the Career Center website to join the listserv.

# Pre-Law Checklist for Second Years

*Build Skills & Clarify Fit*

## 1. Complete a virtual legal simulation through Forage

**Why?** Forage's job simulations, compiled by big-name law firms, let you "test drive" legal work in different settings without needing to land a formal internship.

- **Hint:** You can add Forage work to your resume to highlight legal-specific skills and interests! Not sure how? Attend a resume workshop or drop by the Career Center to have a coach review your resume.

## 2. Use Vault Law to research 2-3 areas of legal practice

**Why?** Having clarity on what type of law interests you will help you choose future experiences and write better application materials.

## 3. Explore research opportunities with faculty and campus groups

**Why?** Research builds analytical, writing, and critical thinking skills — all of which are essential for law school and legal work.

- One of the best research resources is The Office of Undergraduate Research (OUR), which helps students in all majors find faculty-led projects, apply for funding, and get started with research.

## 4. Conduct TWO informational interviews with attorneys in different fields

**Why?** Talking to professionals helps you compare career paths, ask smart questions, and expand your network along the way.

- Speaking with Carolina Alumni can also help you identify UNC-specific resume builders and classes that can support your path to law school.

## 5. Create a spreadsheet or note in your phone to track your experiences and reflections

**Why?** Law school applications require organized self-reflection — starting this early will make writing your Statement of Purpose that much easier.

- Consider organizing columns by experience type, overall reflections, and how this opportunity help you build skills or experiences connected to law school and the legal profession.

# Pre-Law Checklist for THIRD YEARS

*Prepare & Plan*

## 1. Take a diagnostic LSAT through Khan Academy or LSAC LawHub

**Why?** Knowing your starting score helps you build a personalized study plan and avoid unnecessary stress or wasted money.

- See Module 4 of our Pre-Law Pathway in **Heels Engage** for LSAT Prep timelines and study plan strategies.

## 2. Research 8–10 law schools and build a comparison spreadsheet

**Why?** Choosing the right law school requires thinking about finances, location, curriculum, and outcomes — not just rankings.

- You can also use [Spivey Consulting's My Rank tool](#) to sort law schools by 15+ criteria types.

## 3. Identify and/or build relationships with 2–3 recommendation letter writers

**Why?** Strong letters come from professors or mentors who know you well — that takes time, so start early.

- Module 2 of our Pre-Law Pathway in **Heels Engage** covers best practices for identifying recommenders and requesting letters.

## 4. Attend a law school information session on campus or via LSAC and speak with at least THREE admissions reps

**Why?** You'll learn how schools differ and can ask smart, specific questions that show interest later in your application.

## 5. Meet with the Career Center's pre-law advisor to review your plan

- **Why?** UNC's pre-law advisor can help you fine-tune your timeline, prep strategy, and school list — even if you're not 100% sure yet.

# Pre-Law Checklist for **FOURTH YEARS**

*Finalize & Apply*

## 1. Take or retake the LSAT early (ideally by September or October)

- **Why?** Early scores give you time to re-test if needed and avoid missing deadlines at competitive schools.

## 2. Request letters of recommendation from professors/employers

**Why?** Giving your recommenders 4–6 weeks helps them write thoughtful, detailed letters (and reduces your stress).

- Consider requesting your letters before applications open in September (i.e. over the summer) to give everyone even more time to submit materials.

## 3. Finalize your personal and diversity statements

**Why?** These are your most personal materials — they take time to get right. Early feedback makes all the difference and you may be required to complete more than one essay for each law school.

- The Career Center team recommends using [The Writing Center](#) for feedback in applications essays first, and then seeking final thoughts from your Pre-Law Advisor.

## 4. Complete the FAFSA and continue to explore financial aid options

**Why?** Most law schools use FAFSA to determine aid packages — missing this can limit your options.

## 5. Respond to waitlists or admitted student events as needed

**Why?** Demonstrated interest (and professional follow-up), in addition to first-hand visit experiences, can make a difference in final admissions decisions.

# Pre-Law Checklist for GAP YEAR(S)

*Make Your Time Matter*

## 1. Gain meaningful professional, service, or legal experience

**Why?** Law schools value candidates who demonstrate maturity, responsibility, and purpose. Legal experience is helpful, but transferable skills from nonprofits, service programs, or education settings also strengthen your application.

- **Consider:** AmeriCorps, paralegal roles, advocacy orgs, government fellowships, teaching programs, or policy internships.

## 2. Develop a law school budget and financial planning strategy

**Why?** Law school is a major financial commitment. Use your gap year to map out tuition costs, living expenses, loan options, and scholarship opportunities so you can make informed choices later.

- **Consider:** Creating a spreadsheet of estimated costs per school, looking into income-driven repayment plans, and applying for fee waivers through LSAC.

## 3. Stay intellectually engaged through independent reading or coursework

**Why?** Law school is reading-intensive — staying mentally sharp during a gap year helps ease the transition back to academics.

- **Try:** Reading landmark Supreme Court cases, books like *Gideon's Trumpet* or *The Nine*, or taking a free legal studies MOOC (edX, Coursera).

## 4. Build your professional network through informational interviews

**Why?** Gap years offer more flexibility to connect with lawyers, alumni, or other professionals working in your areas of interest. These conversations can clarify your direction and make your application more grounded.

- **UNC Tools:** Use **HeelsEngage**, LinkedIn, and faculty connections to identify contacts. Aim for 1-2 conversations per month.

## 5. Clarify your gap year timeline and application goals

**Why?** Knowing when you plan to apply (e.g. fall 2025 to start law school in 2026) ensures you reverse-engineer your preparation, stay on track with deadlines, and don't miss critical opportunities.

- If you plan to leverage professional experience in your application, consider whether one year will be sufficient when applications are submitted a year in advance.