Preparing for the LSAT
The LSAT score is heavily weighted in decisions of admissibility to law schools. Be well prepared in advance of the test. Either Philosophy 1200, Logic, or Philosophy 2700, Mathematical Logic, is a good course to take in preparation. The sooner you get into the habit of thinking logically quickly the better you will score on the LSAT.

Some people feel it is worthwhile to invest in a preparation course such as Kaplan or Princeton. These courses do force you to practice in an organized manner. However they are expensive and there is disagreement about just how beneficial they are. Either way it is imperative to substantially prepare either through a course or on your own. You can purchase helpful books about preparing for the LSAT, buy old tests, and take practice LSAT’s on line in the Career Center. Start preparing months in advance of the test day. Be sure to take timed practice tests. Nearly all test takers feel they would have figured out the right answer if they had enough time. The LSAT is deliberately stressful. You are being measured on how well you stand up to the test.

The best preparation for the LSAT is to take challenging undergraduate courses that emphasize writing, critical thinking, and analytical skills. Don’t waste time on easy classes in an attempt to pad your grade point average. The real goal is to be successful after you get to law school—not just focused on gaining admission to law school.

When to take the LSAT
The LSAT is offered four times a year: June, late September or early October, December, and February. The best time to take the LSAT is in June. You will have almost a month from the end of the winter semester before the test to do intensive preparation without the distraction of regular coursework. The score will be available in ample time for early applications and you will know where you can realistically apply. This plan also gives you more flexibility in case you are sick on the day of the test, or have some other reason to cancel. You could still take the fall test and apply for the next year.

The most popular time to take the test is the September/October date. If you want to take the test then, plan ahead to take a course reduction to have time to prepare. The fall LSAT frequently falls right at mid-terms (another reason to take it in June) further adding to the stress. The score from a December or February test won’t be available before it is too late to be useful for early decisions for fall admission. The February test is undisclosed so you will never have an opportunity to see what you did right or wrong.

You should plan to have your score available well in advance of stated deadlines. Schools are 65-70% full by the deadlines and aid runs out too.
Preparing for test day
The night before the test get as much rest as possible. Take a silent, reliable watch with you. Dress in layers so you can adjust your clothing to the room temperature. Practice deep breathing or other relaxation techniques if you feel panicky. Stay as calm as possible. Some students find it reassuring to take a practice LSAT in advance in the same room where the real test will be administered.

LSAT Scores
Scores on the LSAT range from 120-180. Law schools publish the 25-75% range of scores of their students. You are less likely to be accepted in a school where your score is in the lower range.

Should you retake the LSAT?
Some students are so dissatisfied with their LSAT score they retake the test. Most law schools (74%) no longer average LSAT scores but take the best score whether it was the first or subsequent attempts. Many schools don’t like to see multiple attempts, however, and you can’t realistically expect a complete turnaround. Students who took the December and February tests had a higher cancellation rate than those who took the June and September/October tests. An analysis of 234 students at MU who retook the test from 2002-2007 (14% of the 1,421 total whose scores were reported) follows:

The first scores of the students who tried again were:
Less than 144  17%  
145-149  35%  
150-154  29%  
155-159  16%  
160-180  3%  
71% improved  
17% improved 9-15 points  
19% improved 6-8 points (the most common improvement was 4 points)  
64% improved 1-5 points  
7% received the same score the second attempt  
22% did worse on the second attempt most common loss was 1-3 points, biggest loss was 10 points

You should consider whether retaking the test is going to make a substantial difference in whether you will be accepted and if it may influence potential financial aid and/or scholarships.

Canceling the LSAT
Don’t be too hasty in canceling your result. No one feels all that good or confident after finishing the test. Talk over your feelings about the test and your performance with someone before you cancel. Cancellations must be signed as in a signed fax, overnight letter, or expedited, mailed score cancellation form. You cannot use unsigned requests such as telegrams, e-mail, mailgrams, or voice mail to cancel. The cancellation notification must be received within nine calendar days of the test.

How long are the scores good?
LSAT scores will be reported for five years, but some schools won’t accept a score that is more than three years old.

Inspiration for parts of this handout came from Kathleen Uradnik, Asst. Prof. of Political Science and Pre-Law Advisor of St. Cloud State University.