BLOGS

How to Plan Your Law School Journey (Before It Even Begins)

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Hey future lawyer!

If you're preparing for CLAT or just stepped into law school, welcome to the ride of a lifetime.

Law school is not just about cracking exams and scoring internships. It's about discovering who you are, what kind of lawyer you want to become, and building the skills, both legal and life, to get there.

But here's the catch: most of us walk into law school without a map. We fumble, we copy what others are doing, and only figure things out when it's already a little late. What if you had a *head-start*?

This guide gives you just that, a **year-by-year roadmap** to help you make the most of your five years in law school. Whether you're aiming to join an NLU, a top private university, or a state college, this plan will help you:

- Build the right mindset from Day 1
- Understand what to focus on each year
- Explore, experiment, and grow — without burning out
- Stay ahead of the curve and prepare for real legal careers

It's written by someone who's lived through the law school chaos, and figured out what works (and what really doesn't).

So if you're wondering what law school is *really* like, or how you can play your cards right from the start read on.

5 Law School Principles You Must Understand First

Before we get into year 1, let's set the tone.

1. Law school is a buffet, not a syllabus. There’s way more to try than just classes.
2. You don’t need to do everything just do enough, smartly.
3. The people around you matter as much as the books in front of you.
4. Consistency > Overachieving once and burning out.
5. You’ll be fine — if you stay curious, sincere, and open to learning.

Ready? Let’s roll.

Year 1: Build Your Foundation (and Confidence)

Mindset: “I’m new here. Let me explore, observe, and build habits.”

Key Goals:

- Understand basic law concepts.
- Get comfortable with reading, writing, and thinking like a law student.
- Join things — even if you’re scared.

Academic Side:

- Focus on “Law and Language” subjects: Constitution, Legal Method, Political Science, Sociology.
- Don’t mug — understand.
- Read the Preamble of the Constitution slowly. You’ll come back to it 100 times.

Skill-Building:

- Start reading news: LiveLaw, Bar & Bench, The Hindu (editorial page).
- Learn how to format a document (Arial 12, 1.5 spacing, justified text – you’re welcome).
- Learn how to use Google Workspace (Docs, Drive, Forms).
- Try Canva. Trust me.

College Life:

- Join societies. Don’t overthink. Legal Aid, Moot Court, Debating, Cultural just jump in. Search Lawctopus for opportunities.
- Befriend your seniors. One coffee with a 5th year can change your path.

What You Can Do:

- Attend your first guest lectures or legal webinars.
- Write a one-page reflection after each subject you study: “What did I understand?”
- Start a Notion/Google Doc titled: “My Law School Learnings.”

Year 2: Try Everything (But Be Mindful)

Mindset: “Let me explore all kinds of lawyering and see what clicks.”

Key Goals:

- Try moots, writing, internships, organizing events. Search Lawctopus for opportunities.
- Begin to figure out what excites you — and what drains you.

Competitions:

- Do intra-college moot court or a mock mediation.
- Try one blog writing competition (Find them on Lawctopus).

Internship Ideas:

- Work with an NGO, junior advocate in trial court, or your professor.
- Watch real cases in court: Bail hearings, cross-examinations, pure drama.

Writing & Resume:

- Create a basic CV. Doesn’t matter if it looks empty now.
- Write one blog post on a current legal issue, and get it published. (Mail it to Lawctopus – aditya.aryan@lawctopus.com!)

Soft Skills

- Practice writing polite, clear emails.
- Start a LinkedIn profile (write like a human, not a robot).

A classmate wrote an article on “The Legal Challenges of Banning PUBG in India.” Got 10,000+ views. Led to his first internship with a tech lawyer.

Year 3: Find Your Niche, Build Your Brand

Mindset: “Time to go deeper. What kind of lawyer could I become?”

Key Goals:

- Pick a direction: corporate, litigation, policy, academia, judiciary, in-house, or even entrepreneurship.
- Develop a body of work, writing, internships, online presence.

Internships:

- Try one each in: → Litigation (Trial/High Court) → Law Firm (even if it’s small) → Think Tank / NGO / Research Centre

Academics:

- Contracts, CrPC, Evidence, Torts, these matter. Don’t study only for exams.
- Start making flowcharts or flashcards.

Writing & Publishing:

- Try submitting to a journal (JURIS, NUJS Law Review, NLSIR, GNLU Law Review).
- Or write for platforms like Academike, Mondaq, and SCC Online Blog.

Online Presence:

- Post on LinkedIn every 2 months: what you learned in an internship, your take on a case, or a simple “5 lessons from my moot experience.”
- Build a portfolio of your work, Notion, Medium, Carrd, or just Google Drive.

Tools to Learn:

- Zotero for citations
- Grammarly for writing
- ChatGPT (yes, for proofreading or explaining legal concepts!)

I cold-emailed a lawyer I admired on LinkedIn with a question about ADR. Two months later, he offered me an internship.

Year 4: Go All In — Intern, Apply, Network

Mindset: "Time to execute. Build credibility. Build relationships."

Key Goals:

- Secure at least one solid internship that can turn into a job offer or LOR.
- Get your resume, writing samples, and cover letter templates ready.

Internships:

- Be strategic now.
- Apply 3–4 months in advance to big firms, top chambers, or research orgs.
- Explore roles at niche startups (legaltech, fintech, human rights orgs).

Publications:

- Present at a national seminar.
- Try one co-authored paper with a friend or senior.
- Submit something to a UGC-recognized law journal.

Networking:

- Attend 2–3 national-level events (ADR competitions, policy conclaves, youth parliaments).
- DM alumni on LinkedIn: "Hi, I'm exploring X. Saw your profile. Could I ask you 2–3 questions?"

LLM or Exam Prep?

- Start researching now. Don't wait till 5th year.
- Explore LLM scholarships (Rhodes, Chevening, JN Tata, Fulbright).
- If judiciary/UPSC is your goal, join coaching or find a peer group.

A friend got into Cambridge for an LLM because he published one strong research paper + did a stellar research internship with a professor. Not just grades.

Year 5: Time to Land Your First Leap

Mindset: "Let's bring it all together. Job, LLM, Judiciary, Startup — go for it!"

Key Goals:

- Finalise your path: job, LLM, exam, research.
- Build your confidence and clarity.
- Apply with intention, not panic.

Job Prep:

- Finalize your CV, 2 writing samples, and a cover letter template.
- Keep a spreadsheet of applications (Company, Role, Deadline, Status).
- Ask for recommendation letters early.

If LLM:

- Finalize SOP and university list.
- Write your story, not just grades. Show your interest, experience, and how the LLM fits.

Judiciary/UPSC:

- Finish the syllabus once.
- Start mock tests.
- Get serious about current affairs.

Mental Health Check:

- It’s okay to not have it all figured out.
- Take breaks. Talk to friends. Avoid comparison. Trust your pace.

One of our batchmates didn’t have a job till April. She kept writing to people, got a remote internship in arbitration, and eventually landed a role with a global firm by June.

Final Year-by-Year Recap

Year	Focus	Must-Do
1st	Foundation	Read, explore, join societies
2nd	Exposure	Competitions, writing, first internship
3rd	Direction	Deeper internships, portfolio, branding
4th	Execution	Strategic internships, applications, networking
5th	Outcome	Jobs/LLM/Exams, finish strong, stay calm

Bonus: Free Law School Toolkit

Tool	Use
Lawctopus	Internships, Calls for Papers, Moot Courts, Debate Competitions, and Other Legal Opportunities
Grammarly & ChatGPT	Writing and editing
Notion or Google Drive	Organising notes, applications
Canva	Visual resumes, event posters
LinkedIn	Networking & visibility

Manupatra/SCC Online	Case law research

Final Words from Your Senior

You'll cry in law school. You'll also laugh harder than ever before. You'll win some moots. You'll lose more. You'll question your life choices. You'll also make lifelong friends.

Just don't sit it out.

Show up. Stay curious. And keep moving forward — one small action at a time.

If you ever feel lost, come back to this guide. Or text a senior. Or **me.** We've been there too. And trust me, you're doing just fine. □□

Note: *This is not an exhaustive list or a straight-jacket formula for planning your five years in law school. Everyone's journey is different, and so should be your approach. Feel free to tweak, twist, and tailor this roadmap based on your interests, goals, and circumstances. Use this as a guiding framework—not a rulebook.*