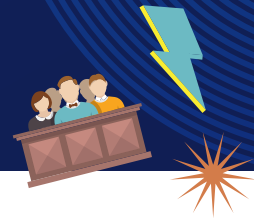


EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES



Introduction

Extracurricular activities are a vital component of legal education, providing students with opportunities to develop practical skills, build professional networks, and enhance their resumes. This guide explores various extracurricular activities that law students can engage in to supplement their academic experience.

1. LAW SCHOOL COMPETITIONS

Law school offers a variety of ways to hone practical legal skills. One of those tools is legal advocacy competitions. The most common types of competitions include mock trial, moot court, negotiations, mediation, alternative dispute resolution, brief writing, and client counseling. While on the surface it may look like advocacy competitions only boost litigation skills, the brief writing and legal critical thinking necessary to engage in these competitions can help any aspiring lawyer. When students think about legal issues from an advocacy perspective—representing one side or the other—it strengthens their ability to find gaps in their logic and creatively strengthen arguments.

Law schools offer opportunities for students to engage in these activities as intermural or against other law schools in competitions. Some competitions even offer students the ability to travel with their teams and practice advocacy skills in real courtrooms before real judges. It is important to speak to your school's head of advocacy to understand the offerings and timings of these activities, so you do not miss signing up or trying out for one of these teams.

Benefits of Law School Competitions:

- Enhances problem-solving and negotiation skills in a fun way
- Strengthens legal writing skills
- Refines public speaking skills
- Provides a competitive yet educational environment
- Offers travel and networking opportunities

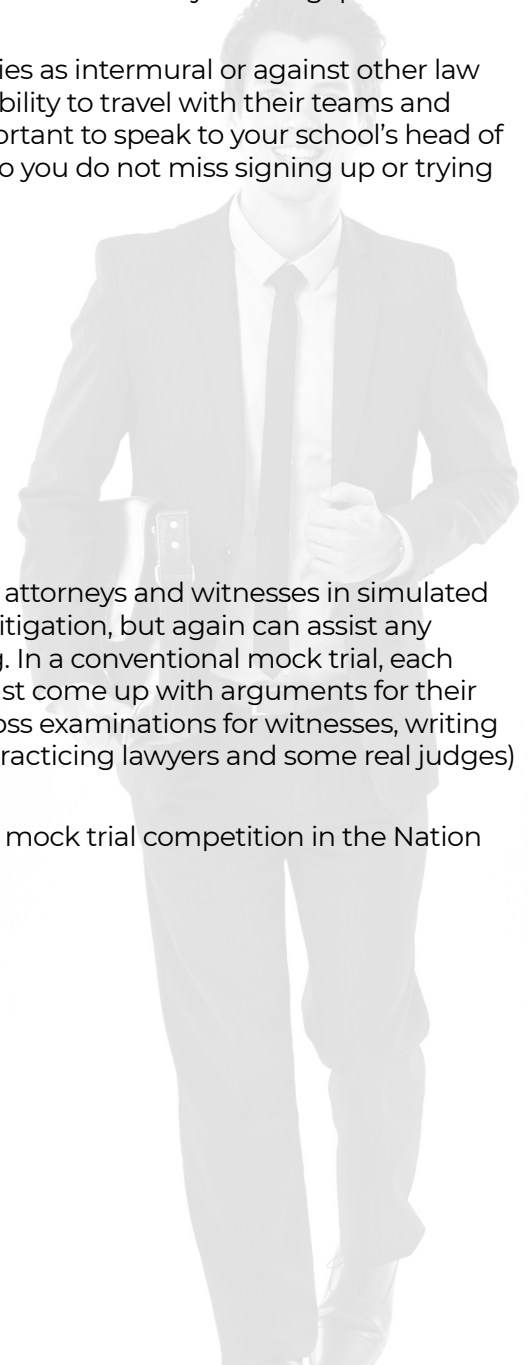
A. Mock Trial

Mock trial competitions focus on trial advocacy, where students act as attorneys and witnesses in simulated courtroom settings. This is an excellent activity for those interested in litigation, but again can assist any aspiring lawyer in legal research and writing as well as public speaking. In a conventional mock trial, each team is given a problem, pleadings, and evidence. The teams then must come up with arguments for their mock client. This includes finding witnesses, developing direct and cross examinations for witnesses, writing motions, creatively using evidence, and arguing in front of “judges” (practicing lawyers and some real judges) who will grade the teams based on their performance.

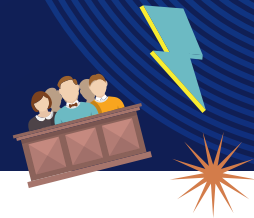
Each year the Texas Young Lawyers Association organizes the premier mock trial competition in the Nation Trial Competition: <https://tyla.org/ntc/>.

Benefits of Mock Trial:

- Develops courtroom presence and trial skills
- Enriches general public speaking skills
- Provides hands-on experience in procedural law
- Enhances teamwork and creative and strategic thinking
- Provides travel and networking opportunities



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A. Moot Court

Moot court competitions simulate appellate court proceedings, allowing students to practice legal research, writing, and oral advocacy. Most moot court competitions include both an oral advocacy component and a submitted brief writing component. In a typical moot court competition, each team is given a legal problem and court decisions from mock courts below. Each team will develop an appellate brief for one side or the other that will usually become part of their score, along with their oral argument score, for at least the preliminary round(s). Once at the competition, teams will practice their oral advocacy skills by arguing both sides of the legal problem—the side they wrote their brief for, and the opposite side as well—before “judges” (practicing lawyers and some real judges). Participation can help refine public speaking skills, legal reasoning, and teamwork.

Each year the Texas Young Lawyers Association organizes the premier state moot court competition for Texas law students: <https://tyla.org/smc/>.

Benefits of Moot Court:

- Enhances legal research and writing skills
- Strengthens ability to work with colleagues to represent clients
- Improves public speaking and argumentation
- Provides travel and networking opportunities

2. LAW REVIEW AND JOURNALS

Joining a law review or journal involves editing and publishing scholarly articles on legal topics. These articles may be from scholars across the country or the students themselves. Journals are often considered prestigious and can enhance legal writing and editing abilities. Many law firms are interested in candidates involved in law reviews and journals because of the legal writing skills it enhances, and the grades required to participate. Most schools allow students to join these organizations either automatically with high grades (e.g., top 10% of the class) or via a “write-on” grading competition. Writing on involves submitting a written article based on a given subject, in the summer after 1L year. It is important to check your school’s requirements for joining the different journals as soon as possible upon entering law school or transferring law schools to avoid missing the grade-on or write-on windows.

Benefits of Law Review and Journals:

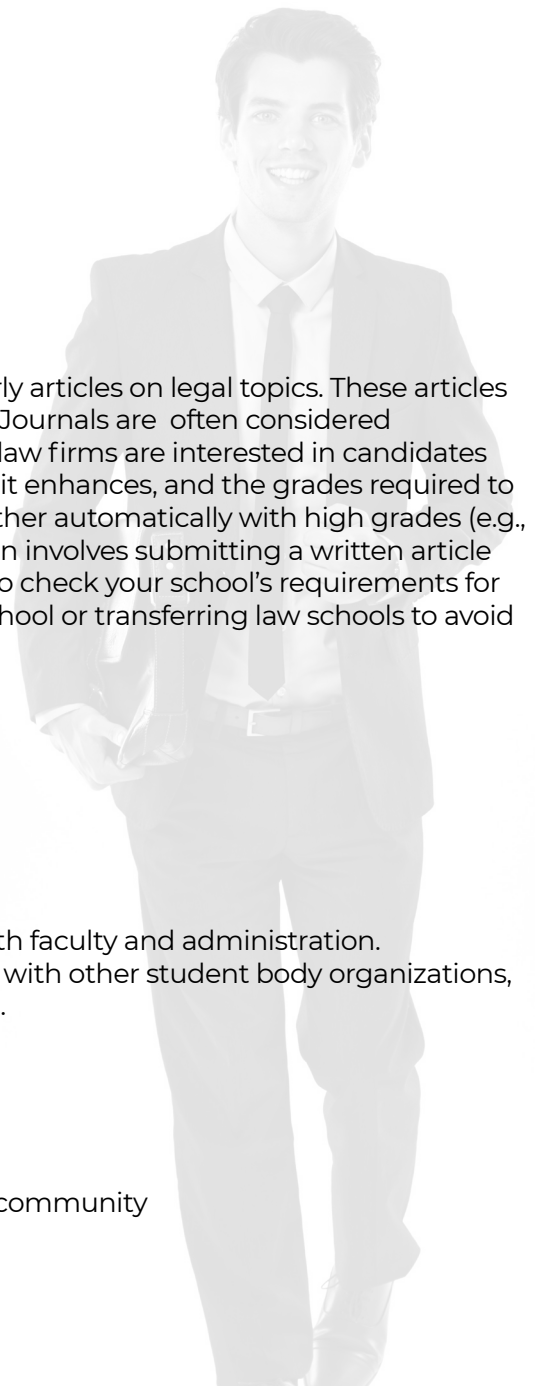
- Sharpens legal writing and editing skills
- Provides exposure to complex and emerging legal issues
- Enhances career prospects, especially for judicial clerkships

3. Student Bar Association (SBA)

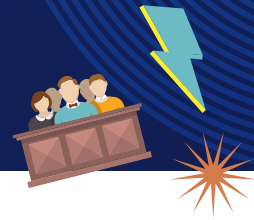
The SBA represents the student body, organizes events, and liaises with faculty and administration. Participation can help develop leadership and organizational skills. As with other student body organizations, this often involves running in an election at the school for the position.

Benefits of the Student Bar Association:

- Offers leadership opportunities
- Enhances organizational and advocacy skills
- Provides networking and recognizability with faculty, peers, and the community



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4. LEGAL CLINICS

Unlike competitions, legal clinics offer hands-on experience in providing legal assistance to real clients under attorney supervision. Clinical work provides experience in a variety of practice areas based on the offerings at the school. For example, one school may offer an immigration legal clinic, while another offers a healthcare clinic. It also provides skills in client intake, legal research, both written and oral communication, and community advocacy. Clinic clients often include companies, entrepreneurs, nonprofit organizations, governmental entities, families, and individuals.

Benefits of Legal Clinics:

- Provides real-world legal experience while working with licensed attorneys
- Supplies opportunities to help those in need
- Enhances practical client intake, interaction, and case management skills
- Fosters a sense of professional responsibility

5. PRO BONO WORK

Many law schools encourage or require students to engage in pro bono work during their time as a law student, offering legal services to underserved communities. Like legal clinics, pro bono work may be in any practice area and often allows students to assist individual clients that would otherwise be underrepresented. These programs help students practice their lawyering skills in a real-world setting by representing clients on a free or reduced-cost basis. It provides attorneys with an appreciation for the importance of giving back to their communities and providing access to legal services.

Benefits of Pro Bono Work:

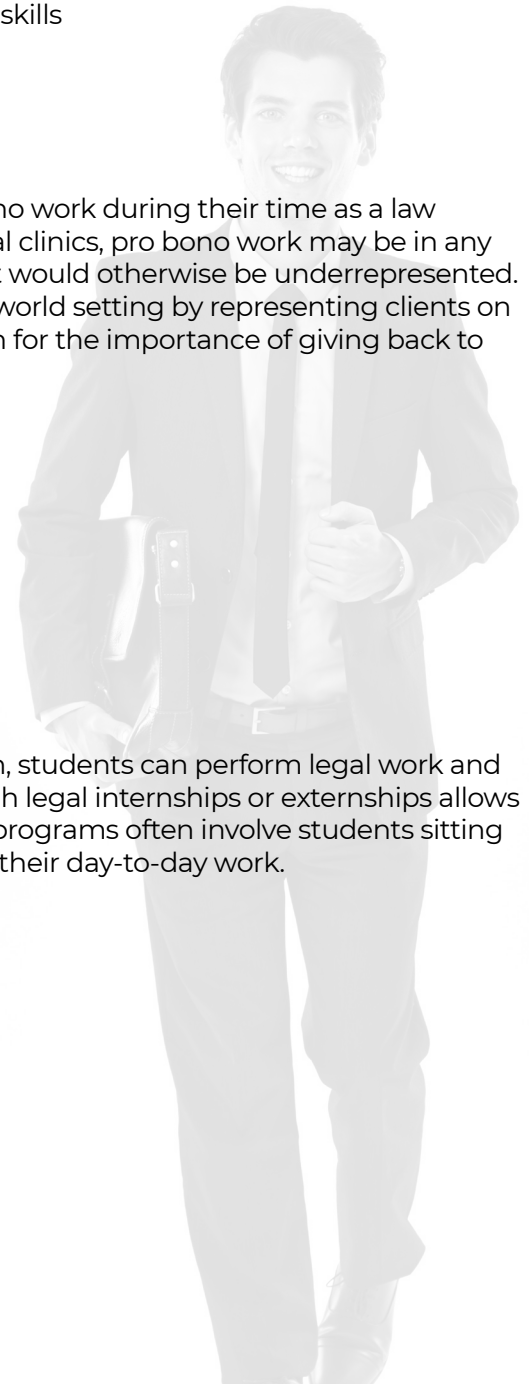
- Provides real-world legal experience
- Builds practical legal skills
- Supplies opportunities to help those in need
- Encourages a sense of social responsibility
- Strengthens resumes and career prospects

6. Internships and Externships

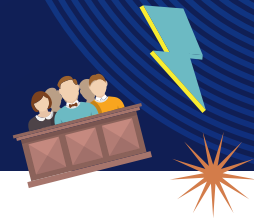
Either in exchange for academic credit or for monetary compensation, students can perform legal work and law-related work outside of the classroom. Gaining experience through legal internships or externships allows students to apply classroom knowledge in real-world settings. These programs often involve students sitting onsite with a practicing attorney or judge to learn the ins-and-outs of their day-to-day work.

Benefits of Internships and Externships:

- Offers exposure to different legal fields
- Builds professional connections
- Provides practical experience for post-graduate employment



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7. PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS

Joining organizations like a local bar association (e.g., Austin Young Lawyers, Dallas Association of Young Lawyers, Houston Young Lawyers Association, etc.), the Texas Law Student Division, the American Bar Association Young Lawyers Division (ABA or ABAYLD), or other local bar associations can be especially beneficial for networking, staying updated on legal trends, and finding legal employment after law school. These local bar chapters provide a way for students to meet lawyers in the community, learn about different practice areas, engage in community service, and become a representative for their law schools. Membership in these organizations typically involves attending regular meetings, assisting on committees (e.g. mock trial committee, or pro bono committee), and attending networking events.

Benefits of Professional Associations:

- Access to resources and networking events
- Opportunities for mentorship and career guidance
- Exposure to legal advancements and professional development

Not sure where to start? The Texas Young Lawyers Association encourages students to join the Law Student Division for an opportunity to interact with your community and local attorneys. Reach out to TYLA to get started.

CONCLUSION

Engaging in extracurricular activities can significantly enhance a law student's educational experience and career prospects. In fact, many hiring lawyers will look for development of some practical skills via involvement in at least one of such activities. By participating in a mix of academic, practical, and leadership activities, students can develop a well-rounded legal skill set that will benefit them throughout their careers. Oh, and they will have a ton of fun too!

