

Employment FAQ

Now that you're considering law school, you are most likely preoccupied with getting in and doing well once you get here. It's not too early to think about what happens after graduation too. Making the transition from law school student to an employed member of the profession is challenging, especially given the current job market. And it requires a targeted, proactive approach that starts in your first semester of law school. We want to make sure you have the information you need to help you navigate this important topic. We've created this list of FAQs and provided our answers. Of course, if you have other questions, please feel free to contact the Office of Admissions and Financial Aid at 212.431.2888 or admissions@nyls.edu.

Where do NYLS grads work?

New York Law School graduates are employed in many different settings, as are most law school graduates across the country. They work in firms, businesses, government offices, and nonprofits in traditional attorney roles. They also find employment in non-traditional settings, such as contract administration, compliance, politics and public policy, legal editing, fundraising, and grant writing. [For a list of representative employers, visit: www.nyls.edu/recentemployers.] The bulk of our graduates find employment in New York and New Jersey.

The majority of our students accept positions in the private sector (2010 stats: 68 percent in firms and businesses), with the largest group practicing in law firms with between 2 and 10 attorneys (56 percent of grads in law firms). The remainder find employment in larger firms, with 30 percent in firms with more than 100 attorneys. Most of the graduates who start their careers in business are employed in financial services, real estate, technology, insurance, and entertainment. NYLS graduates also work as judicial clerks and in government at all levels, with many working for the City of New York, the largest local government in the country. [For employment by sector stats, visit: www.nyls.edu/employmentstats.]

What can I expect to earn?

The salary range for law graduates varies greatly. [For salary stats, visit: www.nyls.edu/employmentstats.] Large law firms offer the highest salaries, and in recent years their starting salaries were between \$145,000 and \$160,000. These are the highest paying entry level jobs for lawyers and, not surprisingly, the most difficult to obtain. Typically only the very highest ranked students in the class obtain these jobs.

It is difficult to report definitive information on starting salaries in smaller firms because the information is not public, and firms and graduates tend to guard their privacy. Based on the data we do have, we estimate that the salary range is \$40,000 to \$80,000.

Salaries of graduates employed in business are determined by the type of work they do, and again, unless the information is published, we must rely on employers and graduates to share the information. Reports of salaries in business for recent graduates have ranged from \$50,000 to \$150,000.

Government salaries for the Class of 2010 ranged from \$50,000 to a high of \$75,000.

Clerkship salaries are dependent on level of court and state, but are typically in the \$40,000 to \$65,000 range.

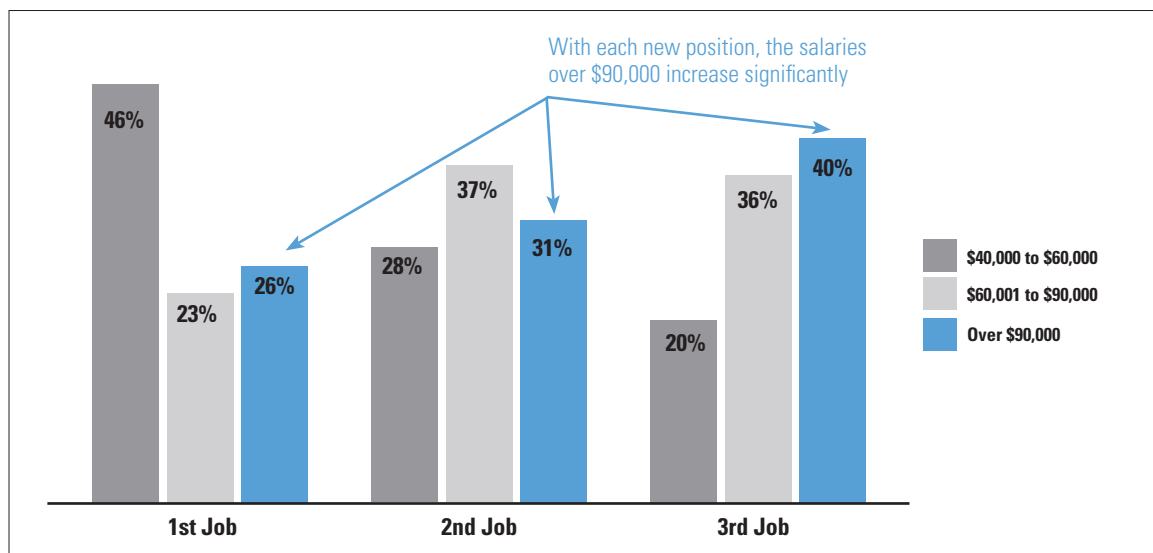
Public interest positions are the lowest paying. For the Class of 2010, the reported salaries were in a very narrow range, from \$48,000 to \$52,000.

It surprises most people how varied starting law salaries are. NALP is the leading organization that tracks employment of new law graduates. They have shown starting salaries graphically: www.nalp.org/salarydistrib.

The entry level salary is one indicator of what you can expect to earn, but many law graduates change jobs three times in their first few years of practice. Most seek new jobs in a preferred practice area or for better compensation. Upon changing jobs, our graduates do see an increase in salary. Your first job will certainly not be your last.

A recent study of New York Law School alumni who graduated between two and four years ago showed their salary increases in their second and third jobs. First salaries in the \$40,000 to \$60,000 range were the most common (46 percent), but that shifted with the graduates' second and third jobs to the least common (20 percent). At the same time, salaries in the \$60,000 to \$90,000 range grew from 22.5 percent to 35.5 percent. Salaries in the range above \$90,000 grew from 26 percent to 40 percent. All of these job changes occurred within four years of graduation.

Salary Progression of Alumni Who Changed Jobs in the First Four Years of Practice



How long will it take me to find a job?

The time it takes to find a job varies. Most likely, you will not have a job locked in at graduation. Less than a quarter of graduates will have a job by graduation, and most of those positions are with employers that hire every year, such as government and large firms. Because many employers require that you be admitted to the bar (bar results are released in November each year), you could be looking at six months or longer from the time you graduate.

How does class rank affect job prospects?

Class rank is a strong factor in large firm hiring and in hiring for judicial clerkships, particularly in the federal courts. This factor is employer-driven, and not determined by law schools. Rank and grade point average are of lesser consideration in smaller firms and other employment sectors. Small firms, government offices, and public interest organizations often look for particular skills and experience and a passion for their work.

How will the tough economic climate impact my job hunt?

In the old days, successful law students could send a résumé and general cover letter to a large number of listings and expect to get a response. These days, there are fewer jobs listed, and that old approach won't cut it.

You have to know what you want (type of law/job) and be able to market yourself (skills, experience) in a credible way. You have to have concrete skills and knowledge in the practice area of your choice. You also need a network of people who know what you're looking for and what you can do. Law school grads are finding jobs through their contacts, not from a mass mailing of résumés. A network of people who know your skills, job interests, and the quality of your work is key. How do you get that? Read on!

What should I be doing to prepare, and how will NYLS help?

You may be thinking: "Why should I be worrying about jobs already?" Frank answer: Roughly 40,000 people graduate from U.S. law schools each year. It is never too early to start differentiating yourself from the other 39,999 graduates you'll be competing with for jobs. So start building the skills, strategies, and networks you'll need from the very beginning. New York Law School provides opportunities for you to do this through the curriculum, as well as through services offered by our Office of Career Services (OCS).

Personal Career Coach: New York Law School assigns each first year section a dedicated career coach from OCS. Your coach will guide you in exploring law practice areas to determine what you're interested in, preparing a résumé and cover letters, identifying networking and mentoring opportunities, and learning how to grow your own network. Throughout your time at NYLS, make use of the OCS's one-on-one counseling sessions and group workshops/events so you can learn how to market yourself effectively. Consider your career coach like a personal trainer—pace-setters and motivators with expertise. Your career coach will help you build a substantial portfolio of legal experience and professional relationships.

Professional Development Curriculum: When you arrive at NYLS, you will begin with the Professional Development Seminar—six sessions over the first year that introduce you to the hiring demands and trends in the legal profession. These sessions will give you a bird's eye view of the decision making "inside the hiring committee." The seminar provides the foundation for you to understand how to build a five-point portfolio of skills, accomplishments, and relationships that will position you well when seeking your first legal job.

The Portfolio: Five Critical Points to Achieve by the Time You Graduate

- Point 1: Three legal work experiences (two summers; one semester). These experiences give you the time for some experimentation and to develop lawyering and professional skills. (Satisfying this point will be different for our part-time Evening Division students).
- Point 2: Integrated experiences and course selection. Your résumé and your transcript should be mutually reinforcing—learning from distinguished faculty, learning from talented practitioners in the field.
- Point 3: Substantial accomplishment. The accomplishment demonstrates your work style: problem-solving, tenacious, with the ability to complete what you started.
- Point 4: A published writing or professional presentation. We want our students to show their learning: not just in their exam "blue books," but also to the profession.

- Point 5: A network of five advisors: faculty, alumni, and supervisors who can provide guidance and encouragement over a career.

With all five portfolio elements completed, graduating students will have integrated their experience, academics, and accomplishments; will be able to demonstrate beginning levels of genuine skill; and will be supported by a self-developed professional network.

What makes our students stand out? Lots of hands-on experience.

Experiential Learning in the Curriculum: New York Law School offers three kinds of courses that provide live practice experience: our clinics, our externship program, and our workshop-seminar classes. More than 125 students take advantage of these résumé-building courses every semester.

New York Law School is on the cutting edge of legal education by offering project-based learning courses, where a small group of students work intensively for a year with a faculty member on a collaborative project. For example, students involved with the Racial Justice Project wrote and submitted an *amicus curiae* brief filed in a racial discrimination case heard by the U.S. Supreme Court. And students involved with the Google Books project are working on cutting-edge copyright and antitrust issues related to Google’s efforts to digitize every book in several of the world’s largest libraries.

Experience in Paid Legal Jobs: A national study of 25,000 law students from 77 schools shows that New York Law School students work in paid legal jobs during the school year in much greater numbers than their peers in other schools. These findings underscore why our prime location in the heart of Lower Manhattan is pivotal to our students’ hands-on success.

Percent of Students with Paid Legal Work during the School Year (By Class Year)

	NYLS	Schools ≤ 900 students	All schools in study
1L	13.8%	9.9%	8.9%
2L	34.1%	30.2%	31.4%
3L	47.5%	38.0%	39.8%

OCS maintains a job listing database, updated daily with semester and summer job listings. Additionally, OCS runs fall and spring recruitment programs to cover all employment sectors from large firms to small firms, government agencies, and nonprofit organizations.

Supporting Our Students in Unpaid Legal Work: We also recognize that scores of nonprofit organizations and government offices offer exceptional learning experiences in unpaid summer jobs. That creates a financial hardship for our students. Through the New York Law School Summer Support Program, we provided stipends to 260 students last summer (2010).

Our Work-Study Program provides vital funding for students to take jobs with NYLS research centers and with off-campus legal employers. More than 350 students had paid jobs through this program last year.

If professional networks are critical to career success, how does NYLS help?

OCS has devised an array of initiatives to help students to connect with alumni and the practicing bar. We want to spare our students from cold-calling attorneys in their fields of interest. We help make the connections.

- Professional Development Seminar: As early as their fall semester, our 1Ls start to meet attorneys for informational interviews.
- Mentor Match Program: Participating 2Ls are paired with an alumnus or alumna for a year filled with meetings, shadowing, and introductions to other attorneys. Over 80 students participated in this inaugural year (2010–11). Students are matched with alumni based on their preferences (practice area, seniority, location, etc.).
- Speed-Networking Receptions: With the Office of Alumni Relations, we host evenings of speed networking for students and alumni with common practice interests. Recent events include a Night for Litigators and an Evening for Entertainment Law.
- In partnership with nearby bar associations, we pair interested students with bar association committee chairs to work hand-in-hand for a year, as Honorary Student Co-chairs. More than 20 committee chairs participate each year.
- Lunch with a Lawyer Program: Alumni and other attorneys volunteer to host lunches for a small number of students, to allow for friendly conversation and easy follow-up. Dozens are held each year.
- Ask-an-Alum Network: We maintain a database providing info on hundreds of alumni who have volunteered to give guidance when an NYLS student calls.

Any final tips and advice?

Don't wait. Remember to think like an aspiring legal professional rather than just as a student. Being in law school is not the same as being in college. It is important to think about your career and your professional development from day one. Meet with your career coach and develop a plan that will take you through all three years of law school and will help you figure out what kind of career you want, build the skills and get the experiences you need to set yourself apart, and make the connections that will help you land a job.

Train for a marathon, not a sprint. This is related to not waiting. Finding a job takes time, but building your experience and professional network and polishing your résumé and interviewing skills take time too. Pace yourself so you can get all of it done, and remember that the process is ongoing. For example, securing a summer job as a 1L or 2L is an important step, but doesn't guarantee a job after graduation.

Be realistic. One statistic you can be sure of is this: 90 percent of your graduating class will not be in the top 10 percent. Large law firms like to recruit from the top of the class, and try as we might, law schools cannot change this. Know where you stand and work with your career coach to come up with a realistic plan.

Don't rely on luck. Hard work and planning is what will pay off, not waiting for an opportunity to fall in your lap. Think of law school as a job and of yourself as a pre-professional.

Be flexible. Often we see students who get their hearts set on one particular job setting—for example, the big firm or a local prosecutor's office—or they look in only one geographic area. Work with your career coach to broaden your search. Think about non-traditional settings that might appeal to you.

Talk to your coach. Your career coach is there to help you; make sure you reach out early and often.