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Five-year or three-year LLB: which law course is right for you?

India offers two routes to a law degree: the five-year integrated course after Class 12 and the three-year LLB after graduation. A comparison.

India offers two recognised routes to a law degree. Both lead to the same right to enrol as an advocate. They suit different people.

The five-year integrated course

Taken after Class 12, it combines an undergraduate degree with law: BA LLB, BBA LLB, BCom LLB or BSc LLB.

Advantages

- You finish a year earlier than a separate degree followed by law.
- You are surrounded by classmates committed to law from the start.
- There is more time for internships, moots and research.
- Most National Law Universities offer this route.

Points to weigh

- You are choosing a profession at seventeen or eighteen.
- Changing track later means starting again.
- The non-law subjects are sometimes treated lightly.

The three-year LLB

Taken after any bachelor's degree.

Advantages

- You come with maturity and knowledge of another field. An engineer makes a strong patent lawyer. A commerce graduate has a head start in tax and corporate law.
- You make the choice as an adult, often after work experience.
- Many respected university law faculties offer it, some with evening or flexible classes.

Points to weigh

- The whole journey is longer.
- The course is compressed, with less time for internships.
- Many classmates may be studying alongside jobs or preparing for other examinations.

What employers think

Law firms, companies, courts and the judicial services recruit from both routes. What they assess is the candidate: clarity of writing, grasp of basic principles, internships and seriousness. In specialised practices a prior degree can be a real advantage.

How to decide

Choose the five-year course if you are reasonably sure about law after school and have access to a good institution. Choose the three-year course if you discover law later, want a first degree in another subject, or wish to keep options open.

Common requirements

- The college must be approved by the Bar Council of India.
- Attendance, internships and practical papers are compulsory under the rules of legal education.
- After the degree comes enrolment with a State Bar Council and the All India Bar Examination.

For those already working

Check the current rules on attendance and mode of study before enrolling. A law degree meant for practice must be earned through a regular, approved course.

The deciding factor

Neither route makes a lawyer. Five years or three, what counts is how you use them: reading, writing, time in court and learning from good seniors.

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