

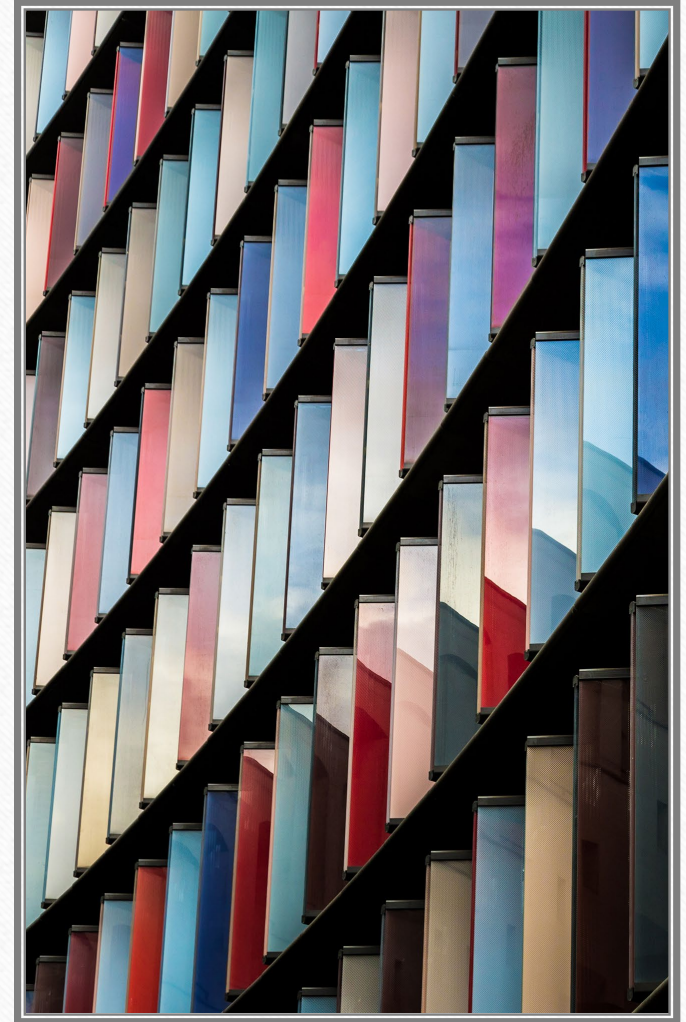
# Steps to Bar Admission in Texas

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Texas Board of Law Examiners



2025





# Board of Law Examiners Supreme Court of Texas

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- The Board of Law Examiners is a judicial agency under the authority of the Supreme Court of Texas and investigates the character and fitness of all applicants on behalf of the Court.
- The Supreme Court of Texas certifies all applicants for admission to the Bar.
- The law requires filing of a Declaration to initiate investigation of applicants.



# Confidentiality

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- All records and proceedings regarding character and fitness are **closed to the public and confidential**.
- Three exceptions are listed in Rule 1(e):
  1. Upon written authority of a Declarant;
  2. In response to a valid subpoena from a court of competent jurisdiction; and
  3. To the Office of Chief Disciplinary Counsel of the State Bar of Texas, or the Texas Unauthorized Practice of Law Committee

# Admission to the Bar is a two-step process

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- Declaration of Intention to Study Law

- October 1 deadline (fall)
- May 1 deadline (spring)
- June 1 deadline (spring quarter hour)
- September 15 deadline (summer entrants)
- Within 60 days of matriculation (if transferring from an out-of-state school)

- Application for Bar Examination

- February 2028 application due September 1, 2027 (to avoid late fee)
- July 2028 application due February 1, 2028 (to avoid late fee)
- UBE transfer application

# Don't delay!

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- The purpose of the Declaration is to provide you with early notice of issues and concerns that need to be evaluated and possibly corrected to remove impediments to licensure.
- **Regular Filing Fee: \$190**
- **Additional Late Fee: \$150**

*Payments are accepted online by credit card or e-check.*

- The latest you could file a Declaration is concurrently with your bar application, but this could delay your licensure.



# ble.texas.gov

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- Visit the **BLE** website for more information specific to Character & Fitness
- Frequently Asked Questions
- Application Forms
- Rules and Policies
- Character & Fitness
- Hearings Procedures
- A copy of this presentation

# ATLAS account required

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- ATLAS is the application processing system for the Board of Law Examiners. Every student filing a Declaration is required to create an ATLAS account on the Board's website.
- Record your username and password for future use.
- Submit your Declaration and pay online.
- Your ATLAS account is the only way the Board communicates with you from filing your Declaration until you receive your bar exam results and licensing information.
  - Add [noreply@ble.texas.gov](mailto:noreply@ble.texas.gov) as a safe sender.

# REQUIRED DOCUMENTS

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You must submit the following documents with your Declaration.

- ❖ Authorization and Release
- ❖ Law school application with all attachments, amendments, and updates
- ❖ Any other documents required by the disclosures you make on your Declaration
- ❖ Within 30 days of submitting your Declaration, you must be fingerprinted with our service code, **even if you have already been fingerprinted for some other purpose.** You cannot be fingerprinted before submitting your Declaration. See <http://ble.texas.gov/fingerprint-information>.



### **Checklist for Declaration of Intention to Study Law for Texas Law Students**

This checklist is for your convenience. Do not upload it. It is not a substitute for reading and complying with the [Rules Governing Admission to the Bar of Texas](#).

#### **To submit your declaration**

- ☐ **Instructions** – Read. When you are done, a green checkmark will appear.
- ☐ **Declaration** – Complete. When you are done, a green checkmark will appear.
- ☐ **Authorization and Release** – Complete, then upload through the Upload Required Documents feature.
- ☐ **Submit Application and Pay Fees by the [Deadline](#)** – Once you have completed each step above, a green Submit button will appear. Click it and follow the prompts to submit fees.

#### **Required for Character & Fitness Investigation**

- ☐ **Fingerprints** – Complete the [fingerprinting process](#).
- ☐ **Law School Application** – For each law school you attended within the last 5 years seeking a JD or other law degree, upload your law school application through the Upload Required Documents feature. (If you transferred law schools since you filed your Declaration of Intention to Study Law, upload your transfer law school application.)
- ☐ **Additional Information & Updates** – Depending how you answered certain questions in your application, you may need to upload additional required documents. Review the Upload Required Documents page and upload all required documentation. If Board staff requests additional information or documents, immediately provide such information. You are obligated to amend your declaration as needed so that your responses remain full, frank, true, and correct.

#### **To complete the processing of your declaration**

- ☐ **Character and Fitness Approval** – The Board has 270 days to complete its character and fitness investigation. For more information, please see our [Character & Fitness page](#).

*This checklist is for your convenience. Do not upload it.*

# DECLARATION CHECKLIST

This checklist is available  
once you create an  
ATLAS account and begin  
the Declaration.

# Read the instructions

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- If you have questions, review the FAQs on our website or email the Board of Law Examiners at [Information@ble.texas.gov](mailto:Information@ble.texas.gov).
- Don't rely on other law students for advice.
- Fully disclose everything.
- Do not omit negative information.
- Demonstrate honesty in the application process to avoid creating additional issues.
- Don't minimize, mischaracterize, or misrepresent the facts, no matter how embarrassing they may be.



# Good moral character

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- Our investigation is an assessment of character traits that are likely to result in injury to future clients, obstruct the administration of justice, or violate the Texas Disciplinary Rules of Professional Conduct.
- TEXAS DISCIPLINARY RULES OF PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT
- These traits often involve dishonesty or a lack of trustworthiness in carrying out responsibilities.

# What must be disclosed?

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Requires detailed information about:

- College attendance (any and all, including dual enrollment, community colleges, colleges outside the U.S., etc.)
- Law school attendance (any and all)
- Employment history (within the last 10 years, or since your 18th birthday, whichever period is shorter.) Internships and externships, paid or unpaid, should also be disclosed.
- Residence history (any cities/states/countries where you have resided, worked, or attended school within the last 10 years.) Do not leave gaps and be sure to include all residence history up to the time you submit your Declaration.
- Professional licenses
- Military service
- Personal references. You must provide contact information for six character references (may not be law school classmates, relatives, or anyone listed as an employment contact.)



## Matters of interest to character assessment

School Discipline  
(including suspension,  
expulsion, adjustment of  
grade, community service,  
or any written notice of  
reprimand or warning)

Civil litigation (including  
divorce or class action suits,  
evictions, small claims suits)

Bankruptcy filings

Compliance with court  
orders (child support,  
judgments)

Past-due child support

Significant past-due debt  
(\$50,000 past due or more)

Professional discipline

Contempt of court

# Matters of interest to character assessment

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UPL (unauthorized practice of law)

Failure to timely file or timely pay state or federal income taxes

Failure to timely file and pay payroll taxes

Non-disclosure of required matters to your law school or the Board of Law Examiners

Dishonesty or lack of candor in answers

Criminal history (see next slides)



# Criminal History

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Read the questions carefully.

6.1: Have you **ever** been convicted of an offense, placed on probation, or granted deferred adjudication or any type of pretrial diversion?

6.2: Have you, **within the last 10 years**, been arrested, cited or ticketed for, or charged with any violation of the law?

The full text of the questions appears on the Declaration.

Exercise due diligence. Check with courts, arresting agencies, parents. Ask questions before submitting your Declaration.

# Criminal History

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Offenses involving alcohol and/or drugs must be included.



Class C misdemeanor traffic violations should be omitted.



Failure to Appear and Failure to Maintain Financial Responsibility ("No Insurance") are not considered to be minor traffic violations and must be disclosed.



Visit [www.texasfailuretoappear.com](http://www.texasfailuretoappear.com), a DPS website, to determine if you may have had any Failures to Appear.



# Criminal History

- Expunged or sealed charges **must not** be disclosed. Ensure you have a signed court order expunging or sealing the offense. If you disclose expunged or sealed offenses, you will be required to remove them.
- If you disclosed expunged or sealed charges on your law school application, redact them from your law school application before providing us with a copy. **See our FAQs about how to redact your law school application.**
- Offenses under an Order of Non-Disclosure **must not** be disclosed, but the Board may consider such offenses.
- For felony criminal history, see Rule 4 for more information, and contact the Director of Investigations with questions.

# Amending Your Law School Application

You may need to amend your law school application to include information about your criminal history or school disciplinary history. Take action as soon as possible to correct any deficiencies.



Your law school may have already provided you with instructions on how to amend your law school application.



Board staff may also direct you to amend your law school application.



Provide us with a copy of your amendment and the law school's response.

# Amending your Declaration

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- If you omitted required information, you must amend your Declaration.
- Board staff may direct you to amend your Declaration.
- **See our FAQs about how to amend your Declaration.**
- Click [Amend Application](#)

Amend the correct section.

Click [Submit Amendment](#)



# Fitness

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Fitness is the assessment of mental and emotional health as it affects the competence of a prospective lawyer.

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The fitness required is **present** fitness.

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The purpose of this inquiry is to exclude persons with a mental or emotional illness or condition which would be likely to prevent the person from carrying out duties to clients, courts, or the profession.

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The likelihood is determined by acts of misconduct that are related to the mental illness or condition and not the diagnosis alone.

# Fitness Questions

- 7.1 Conduct or Behavior

- Within the past 5 years, have you exhibited any conduct or behavior that could call into question your ability to practice law in a competent, ethical, and professional manner?

- 7.2 Mitigation

- The purpose of this inquiry is to determine the current fitness of an applicant to practice law. The mere fact of treatment, monitoring, or participation in a support group is not, in itself, a basis on which admission is denied; the Board of Law Examiners encourages applicants who may benefit from assistance to seek it.
- **Within the past 5 years, have you asserted any condition or impairment as a defense, in mitigation, or as an explanation for your conduct in the course of any inquiry, investigation, or administrative or judicial proceeding by an educational institution, governmental agency, professional organization, or licensing authority; or in connection with an unemployment claim, employer discipline, or termination procedure?**

# Processing your Declaration

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Once you submit your Declaration, you will receive an acknowledgement through ATLAS.

Your analyst will review your Declaration and post Missing Items notifications to your ATLAS user homepage.

Investigation requires up to 270 days (9 months)

You will receive Status Letters at least every 60 days.

Log into your ATLAS account **at least monthly** to be sure you do not fail to respond to any requests for information.

Add  
[noreply@ble.texas.gov](mailto:noreply@ble.texas.gov)  
as a safe sender.

If you fail to respond to our requests for information, we will assess an additional \$75 incomplete fee and may terminate your Declaration.



# Your ATLAS user homepage

## Messages

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- Once you submit your Declaration, your file will be assigned to a Licensure Analyst. Your analyst's name will appear on your ATLAS user homepage.
  - Use the blue "Create Message" button to send messages to your analyst.
  - Messages are like emails, not chats.
- **Example:**  
**ANALYST**  
**Your analyst is (first name)**  
**Create Message**

# Your ATLAS user homepage

## Missing Items

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- Your analyst will post missing items with specific deadlines on the right side of your ATLAS user homepage. Once you submit the missing item and the analyst has reviewed it, the item will be marked "Completed/Closed."
- **If necessary, send a message to request more time.** The earlier in the investigation you do this, the more we can help you. We may ask you to provide proof you requested the item.

### Example:

- **MISSING ITEMS**

*Fingerprinting Requirement -*

**[Completed/Closed]**

# Status Letters

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will be sent at least every  
60 days to provide you  
with regular updates

May 16, 2023

Dear First Name Last Name:

We are processing your Declaration of Intention to Study Law and we are working to complete it as soon as possible. Our character and fitness investigation can take up to 270 days.

This letter shows the status of your Declaration as of May 16, 2023. We will send an updated Status Letter within 60 days.

## **Declaration Requirements**

### • **Fingerprint results received: No.**

Visit <https://ble.texas.gov/fingerprint-information>. You will need the following information to register with Identogo:

- Texas Board of Law Examiners Service Code:
- ORI.

### • **Law school application received or not required: No.**

For each law school you attended within the past five years, order your law school application from your law school registrar or obtain it from your LSAC.org account. Then use the Upload Required Documents feature on your ATLAS User Home page to upload it to your ATLAS account.

**In addition, please review the "Missing Items" section on your ATLAS User Home page for any other documents or information your Analyst may need to complete our investigation.**

Please note that once you upload a requested item, amend your application, or send a message:

- Your Analyst is automatically alerted
- Your item is automatically stamped with the date and time of submission
- Your Analyst needs some time to review the item before we can mark it as completed or otherwise respond
- You can view all the items you have uploaded in the "Uploaded Documents" box on your ATLAS User Home page

Please do not send multiple messages through ATLAS or emails to the general BLE email requesting the status of an item. This only slows down our response time. We will notify you via your ATLAS account if we need anything from you.

Please do not upload the same document multiple times.

We recommend that you log into your ATLAS account regularly (at least once per month) to review any "Missing Item" notifications, Admission Documents, and messages from your Analyst.

Your assistance and cooperation with our investigation are very important.



# Updating your Declaration

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- When you complete your Declaration, you will certify that the information you disclosed is correct. You will also acknowledge your obligation to update your responses whenever there is an addition or a change to the information provided.
- Contact information
- New arrests
- New school discipline
- Any other additions or changes to the information

# End of investigation

- With timely filing and your prompt cooperation, we can successfully resolve most issues and concerns, and certify your character and fitness.
  - A notification will appear on your ATLAS user homepage.
- In some cases, staff issue a negative preliminary determination letter (PDL) if significant issues of concern to the Board were identified during our investigation.
  - A notification will appear on your ATLAS user homepage.
  - We will provide additional information about next steps if you receive a PDL.
- We will update our character and fitness investigation when you file your bar exam application.

**Good luck in law school!**  
**Contact us with questions.**

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[INFORMATION@BLE.TEXAS.GOV](mailto:INFORMATION@BLE.TEXAS.GOV)

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ZOOM "OFFICE HOURS":  
([HTTPS://BLE.TEXAS.GOV/DECLARATION-  
OFFICE-HOURS-SCHEDULE](https://ble.texas.gov/declaration-office-hours-schedule))

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[BLE.TEXAS.GOV](https://ble.texas.gov)

