Your LSAT Score

The LSAT, like any standardized test, is not a perfect measuring instrument. One way to quantify the amount of measurement error associated with LSAT scores is through the calculation of the ***standard error of measurement****. The standard error of measurement provides an estimate of the average error that is present in test scores because of the imperfect nature of the test. An error-free score, called a true score, could only be obtained from a hypothetical test that contained no measurement error. This brochure explains score bands, which are used in score reports to quantify the uncertainty inherent in individual test scores.*

Many factors besides measurement error can also affect an individual's test performance on a particular day (e.g., motivation, physical and mental health, or work and family responsibilities). These other factors are not explicitly taken into consideration when calculating score bands.

What is a score band?

LSAT scores are *estimates* of a test taker's actual proficiency level in the skills tested. Score bands represent a range of scores that has a certain probability of containing the test taker's actual proficiency level. The score bands reported for the LSAT are designed to include the test taker's actual proficiency level in approximately 68 percent of cases. In other words, there is a 68 percent level of confidence that the test taker's true score actually falls within the band.

How is a score band calculated for individual test scores?

Score-band calculations are based on the standard error of measurement. The standard error of measurement for the LSAT is very stable, and tends to be about 2.6 scaled score points. A score band with a 68 percent confidence level can be constructed by subtracting the standard error of measurement from the scaled score to obtain the lower value and adding the standard error of measurement to the scaled score to obtain the upper value. Therefore, the width of the score band is approximately 7 scaled-score points, after rounding.

The 68 percent (or approximately two out of three) level of confidence used by the Law School Admission Council (LSAC) for reporting purposes is a commonly used standard. To obtain a 95 percent level of confidence, the standard error of measurement can be doubled before constructing the score band. Therefore, a 95 percent confidence band would be approximately twice as wide as a 68 percent confidence band. Likewise, a 99 percent confidence band would be approximately three times as wide as a 68 percent confidence band.

The LSAC employs a more complicated calculation to accommodate scores that lie at the upper and lower extremes of the LSAT score scale.

How is a score band calculated for the average test score?

Most law schools will average the test scores of test takers who have taken the LSAT more than once. The standard error of measurement is used in a similar way as that described for individual scores in calculating the score bands for the average test score. However, there is less measurement error associated with an average score than there is with a score earned on a single day of testing. The standard error of measurement is adjusted to take into account the number of scores earned by the candidate in calculating the score band for an average score, resulting in a somewhat more narrow band.

Does the test date (when I took the test) have an effect on the score band?

The standard error of measurement used to construct the score bands has been very stable from one LSAT administration to the next. Because score bands are rounded to whole score points, your test date should have little or no effect on the resulting score band.

(For additional information about your LSAT score, see the *LSAT/LSDAS Registration and Information Book*.)

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