

Transition Summer Reading List

Year 11 into Year 12 · Starting A-Level Law in September 2025

Welcome to A-Level Law. You've made a brilliant choice. Law is one of the most intellectually demanding, endlessly relevant and deeply satisfying subjects you can study at sixth form. This list has been put together especially for students making the jump from GCSE — you don't need any prior legal knowledge. What you do need is curiosity, an open mind, and a willingness to read.

You are **not** expected to read every book here. Pick **two or three** that appeal to you. The titles marked **PRIORITY READ** are the ones we most strongly recommend. Everything on this list will give you a genuine advantage when lessons begin in September.

START HERE — WHAT IS LAW?

No prior knowledge needed. These books will spark your curiosity and give you a head-start.

01 Law: A Very Short Introduction

Raymond Wacks

Slim, readable and brilliantly written. Covers what law is, where it comes from and why it matters — perfect for someone completely new to the subject.

Why read it: Sets the philosophical groundwork you'll need for Eduqas from day one.

PRIORITY READ

BEGINNERS

02 The Secret Barrister: Stories of the Law and How It's Broken

The Secret Barrister

An anonymous barrister's honest, funny and alarming account of the criminal justice system. You will finish this book genuinely excited to study law — and angry about the state of it.

Why read it: Makes criminal law real. You'll see actus reus and mens rea playing out in real courtrooms.

PRIORITY READ

CRIMINAL LAW

03 Letters to a Law Student

Nicholas J. McBride

Written as letters to a student just like you. Covers how to read cases, how to construct legal arguments and how to write at A-Level and beyond.

Why read it: Teaches you HOW to study law — the single most useful thing you can read before September.

SKILLS

ESSENTIAL

UNDERSTANDING THE LEGAL SYSTEM

Unit 1 of your Eduqas course — get a head-start on courts, sources of law and legal personnel.

01 The English Legal System: A Very Short Guide

Gary Slapper

Explains the court hierarchy, the role of judges, barristers, solicitors and juries in plain English. Direct preparation for Eduqas Unit 1.

Why read it: You'll recognise court names and processes from the very first lesson in September.

EDUQAS UNIT 1

DIRECT PREP

02 The Rule of Law

Tom Bingham

Former Lord Chief Justice of England and Wales. Explores the most fundamental concept in law — that nobody, including the government, is above the law. Beautifully written.

Why read it: The rule of law comes up throughout your A-Level and in every university application letter.

RULE OF LAW

SHORT READ

03 Blinding Everyone with Science: Or How to Read Statistics

Mark Rowh / or 'Bad Science' by Ben Goldacre

Law students need to evaluate evidence critically. This type of reading trains you to question sources, statistics and arguments — skills used throughout your law essays.

Why read it: Critical thinking underpins every A-Level law essay.

THINKING SKILLS

CROSSOVER

A TASTE OF CRIMINAL LAW

One of the two main substantive law areas you will study — get curious before you begin.

01 Unlocking Criminal Law

Tony Storey & Alan Lidbury

Part of the Unlocking Law series — written specifically for A-Level students. Introduces offences, defences and the idea of fault in clear, accessible language.

Why read it: You'll arrive at sixth form already familiar with key terms like actus reus, mens rea, intention and recklessness.

CRIMINAL LAW

A-LEVEL INTRO

02 Just Mercy

Bryan Stevenson

A true story of a US lawyer defending wrongly convicted prisoners on death row. Raises powerful questions about justice, race, guilt and punishment that will fuel your law essays.

Why read it: Challenges you to think beyond the rules — what is justice for? An exceptional read.

JUSTICE

INSPIRING

A TASTE OF TORT & CONTRACT LAW

The civil law pillars of your A-Level — a gentle introduction before the detail begins.

01 Unlocking Tort Law

Chris Turner & Tricia Aquino

Another excellent A-Level introduction from the Unlocking series. Covers negligence and occupiers' liability — core Eduqas tort content — in student-friendly language.

Why read it: Negligence is one of the trickiest areas to grasp quickly; a summer head-start pays dividends.

TORT LAW

A-LEVEL INTRO

02 Consumer Law and the Street: Everyday Contract Stories

See note below

Rather than a textbook, try reading real consumer rights stories on the Which? website (which.co.uk) or the Citizens Advice website. Spot the offer, acceptance and consideration in everyday transactions.

Why read it: *Contract law is everywhere — train tickets, online shopping, employment. Spotting it in real life is the fastest way to understand it.*

CONTRACT

EVERYDAY LAW

BROADEN YOUR MIND

Not about law directly — but outstanding for developing the thinking, empathy and argument you need.

01 Twelve Angry Men

Reginald Rose (play/screenplay)

A jury deliberates a murder verdict. Each juror has biases, blind spots and agendas. Short, gripping and endlessly relevant to discussions of jury trial, reasonable doubt and justice.

Why read it: *Raises every debate about the jury system you'll encounter at A-Level.*

JURY SYSTEM

CLASSIC

02 To Kill a Mockingbird

Harper Lee

If you haven't read it — read it. A trial, a defence lawyer, racial injustice and the limits of the law. One of the most important books ever written about justice.

Why read it: *Your understanding of what law should do — and sometimes fails to do — will deepen enormously.*

JUSTICE

MUST-READ

03 Bad Law: Ten Popular Myths About the English Legal System

The Secret Barrister

Busts common myths about law — from 'you have the right to silence' to 'innocent until proven guilty'. Perfect for someone about to begin studying law seriously.

Why read it: *Arrives on day one knowing what is actually true — and impressing your teacher immediately.*

LEGAL MYTHS

ACCESSIBLE

TIPS FOR YOUR TRANSITION SUMMER

■ Watch as well as read

BBC iPlayer: 'The Jury: Murder Trial', 'Silk', and any documentary about the justice system. Netflix: 'Making a Murderer', 'The Innocent Man'. Watch critically — spot legal issues.

■ Follow the news legally

Get into the habit of reading BBC News Law section, Legal Cheek and The Guardian's Law pages. When a criminal case is reported, ask yourself: what offence? what defence? what verdict?

■ Learn five key cases before September

Donoghue v Stevenson [1932], R v Woollin [1998], Carlill v Carbolic Smoke Ball Co [1893], R v Ahluwalia [1992], Caparo Industries v Dickman [1990]. Google each — know the basic facts and legal principle.

■ **Start a vocabulary list**

When you encounter a legal term you don't know — actus reus, mens rea, ratio decidendi, obiter dicta, vicarious liability — write it down with a definition. Bring this list in September.

■ **You don't need to know everything yet**

Your job this summer is curiosity, not mastery. Read what interests you. Ask questions. Enjoy it. The detail comes in lessons — but enthusiasm is yours to build now.

Your five cases to know before September:

1. Donoghue v Stevenson [1932] — birth of the duty of care in negligence (TORT)
2. Carlill v Carbolic Smoke Ball Co [1893] — offer and acceptance in contract (CONTRACT)
3. R v Woollin [1998] — oblique intention in murder (CRIMINAL)
4. Caparo Industries v Dickman [1990] — three-stage test for duty of care (TORT)
5. R v Ahluwalia [1992] — loss of control / provocation defence (CRIMINAL)