

A LAWYER'S LIFE

We asked our trainee solicitors at Machins a few questions to help you decide on whether a career in law is for you.

Favourite thing about working in the legal field

For many people, instructing a solicitor is a daunting and nerve-racking procedure. They are usually facing a tough decision or are struggling through a rough spot in their lives. The sense of reward when you are able to help and provide answers is unmatched.

Worst thing about working in the legal field

The paperwork. Unfortunately, in the legal sector there is always lots of paperwork despite the electronic resources we have available. Most solicitors will deal with lots of paperwork – including ancient property deeds from the 1900s - on a daily basis which can be VERY time consuming.

What advice would you give to students considering pursuing a career in law

Always be proactive, use your initiative, and be resilient. It can be disappointing when you are unsuccessful in applying for opportunities, but if you persist, the right opportunity will come along. It's worth getting involved with activities and societies whilst you're at school and university to develop transferable skills. These will be useful to discuss in the interview and application process!

What are some of the skills employers look for when recruiting trainee solicitors

At Machins, we are looking for self-motivated, commercially-minded individuals with excellent interpersonal skills and a demonstrable interest in law who are interested in developing a career beyond qualification. For more information visit the Trainee Hub on our website.



Machins Solicitors LLP provide legal services for:

Business Services

- > Company Commercial
- > Commercial Property
- > Employment
- > Commercial Litigation
- > Immigration

Individual Services

- > Family, Children & Separation
- > Wills, Trusts and Probate
- > Buying and Selling a Home
- > Employment
- > Dispute Resolution
- > Immigration

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THINKING OF A CAREER IN LAW?

Despite what you might have seen on TV, there is more to law than the stereotype of people in wigs! From barristers commanding the court room with a stirring speech to solicitors achieving a hard-fought legal battle for their clients, there is something for everyone in the legal field. We hope this summary will help you to understand what it means to work in law.

TO BE OR NOT TO BE?

People working in law often get called 'lawyers' but this is a catch-all term that applies to all professionals within the legal field. In practice, a lawyer is usually one of three different professions: Solicitors, Barristers or Legal Executives. It is important to pursue the profession which aligns with your strengths.

Barristers handle all matters of court from preparing the court documents through to delivering their argument to the judge. A barrister usually has to be quick-thinking, comfortable with public speaking and have a deep knowledge of the law. (This is the one that wears the wig!)

Solicitors are the most common form of lawyers in the UK and they handle all aspects of law outside of the court room, although in certain specialisms solicitors do undertake some advocacy (arguing in court). Alongside the relevant qualifications, a solicitor needs to be organised, straight-talking and have a good helping of common sense.

In the main barristers and solicitors have traditionally undertaken a degree before going on to undertake professional training. However, there are alternative routes into law such as studying with CiLEX or via apprenticeships. In this guide we will focus here on the traditional route for solicitors.

It's important to note that anyone can become a lawyer regardless of university, school or background.



THE JOURNEY TO SOLICITOR

In the past few years there have been changes in the route to qualification to open up the profession to more individuals. To become a solicitor on a traditional route you will need to complete:-

- A-Levels (or equivalent qualification)
- A degree – this is not necessarily restricted to a Law Degree
- Pass SQE1 & SQE2 Exams

SQE1 is the technical aspect and there are two papers called FLK1 & FLK2. You do not need to undertake a training course to sit these exams but many would recommend you do so as there are hundreds of multiple choice questions on technical knowledge.

SQE2 is focused on law in practice and involves attending an assessment centre where you participate in simulated situations that a solicitor is expected to be competent in on day one of qualifying (e.g. client interviewing). Again, most people undertake training courses to prepare for these exams but they are not compulsory.

- Two years' full-time qualifying work experience (QWE) or equivalent hours if only working part-time

This can be gained in up to four organisations, in paid or volunteer work, and could include time spent:

- on placement during a law degree
- working in a law clinic
- at a voluntary or charitable organisation or a law centre
- working as a paralegal
- on a training contract (a two year contract which would give you exposure to different seats to assist in identifying your preferred practice area)

QWE must be in the provision of legal services and include exposure to at least two competences in the Statement of Solicitor Competence (available on the SRA website). It also advises on who can verify that your role met the requirements.

For your A-Levels (or equivalent qualification) it does not matter which subjects you choose, and there is no need to study A-Level Law. A degree will usually last between three to four years depending on your university choice and again you can choose whether you study law or not. The full process usually takes around six to eight years after the completion of A-Levels or equivalent but can take longer dependent on securing the right kind of roles.

It is important when thinking about how you gain your QWE to recognise that not all solicitor positions are the same and that the area of law impacts day-to-day activities. For example, the role and tasks of a lawyer in family law is very different to a lawyer in company law. It is good to try to get experience in a variety of different departments so you can work out what areas of law interest you. When thinking about the kind of 'seats' that you could gain experience in there are those classed as individual services and those classed as business services. There are also areas considered contentious and non-contentious. The contentious seats are more likely to involve court attendance.

