



**Career  
Guide:  
Getting into  
Law**

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## Law

Laws affect all aspects of our lives from; whether you have a right to live and work somewhere, to how old you have to be to learn to drive, to get married or vote. It affects what you can and can't do as an individual or as a business and protects people from harm, discrimination, theft and violence.

**The main two professional lawyer roles are solicitors and barristers.**

A law firm might employ a team of people including; legal executives, paralegals and solicitors. Your firm may specialise in one area of law such as business law or you could be working on a range of areas such as divorce, property, wills and employment disputes.

Whilst solicitors do go to court, Barristers wear a wig and gown in court and can work in higher levels of court than a solicitor. Their main role is to represent their client in court and argue their case. They are often self- employed and may

be based at a '[barrister's chambers](#)'. Of the 355 chambers over 200 are based in London. Barristers usually specialise in different aspects of law – for example human rights, common law and criminal law.

You could also work as a solicitor or barrister for the [Crown Prosecution Service](#) – it employs thousands of people and prosecutes large cases such as terrorism and organised crime such as modern day slavery.



### Solicitor or Barrister?

Not sure what law career would suit you?

Find out more about careers in law [in Careerpilot job sectors](#) and you can also read [Verdict](#) – an online magazine for students interested in law careers to find out about different specialisms.

### Considering other law related careers?

#### Upholding the Law

There are also careers where you are upholding or applying the law every day - such as the police, customs, immigration advisers, prison officers, probation officers, social workers, health and safety advisers, armed forces and security services. Read more about these careers [here](#).

It is important that businesses understand the law too for example, for exporting or importing goods after Brexit. Many people with a law background are to be found in jobs in [HR, tax, finance and procurement](#).



#### Jobs Pressurising for a Change in the Law

Maybe you think that there need to be some new laws to change how we live. If so, you could work for a charity or a pressure group that wants to campaign to take action to change the law on something that you think is important. You could work as their solicitor or you may work in a job such as a [public affairs consultant](#) who lobby government or through a [campaigning role](#) for a charity.

## Deciding if a career in Law will suit you?

It can take six years or more of training to become qualified in the law profession – do you have what it takes? Check out this [short film](#) to find out where you need to start.

## What are useful qualifications for law?

**What are useful A levels for a career in Law?** – Take subjects you enjoy and are likely to get a good grade in as this will give you more choices for your next steps. Essay based, analytical subjects like History and English Literature are useful. However, any of these facilitating subjects will also be useful including; Geography, Languages, Philosophy, Maths and Sciences and Law [though not essential].

## What are useful vocational subjects for a career in law?

Some schools and colleges may offer a Level 3 vocational applied course in Law

Law may also be covered in other vocational courses such as Business and Finance, Uniformed Public services, and Health and Social Care.

## Routes into Law Careers.

### University route

The two professional careers in law are a solicitor and a barrister and they are [very different](#).

To work as a solicitor you can **either go through a degree route or an apprenticeship route**. Though, the apprenticeship route still has a much smaller number of opportunities available.

To work as a barrister – you must currently go through the degree route.

To see which one suits you – why not take the [solicitor v barrister quiz?](#)

### Studying a Law degree – What you need to know.

Law is a popular degree and not everyone who does it goes into a career practicing law. Whether you choose to go into a law career or not, the skills and knowledge you have developed during the degree, do give you lots of options when you graduate.

Law can be a very competitive degree and the university you go to can make a difference to getting into a law career afterwards. For example elite law firms in the '[Magic Circle](#)' have mainly recruited from Russell group universities.

### How is the course taught?

Not all universities teach Law in the same way. There are traditional universities who rely on lectures and seminars and the occasional mooted competition. There are also universities who teach through group problem based learning and also by doing practical pro bono work with clients to develop knowledge and skills. So make sure you check out the different options to find the right place for you to learn.

### Is it LLB?

If you do decide to study for a law degree make sure it is accredited by the [LLB](#) [translated from Latin it means Bachelor of Law]. This means you do not have to sit the Graduate Diploma in Law after your degree if you want to be a barrister.

## Can I combine Law with something else?

There are LLB Law courses that you can take alongside other subjects such as business or languages.

## Do I need to take an entrance test?

These [universities](#) use the [Law National Aptitude Test \[LNAT\]](#) entrance test as part of the application process to help see if you have the potential to do a law degree. It is not a test of legal knowledge instead it assesses your verbal reasoning skills, ability to understand and interpret information and capabilities to draw conclusions.

Registration opens on 1<sup>st</sup> August for test bookings and you can do the test before or after you have submitted your UCAS form. The deadline for sitting the test is 20<sup>th</sup> January.

The test includes multiple choice questions and essay questions. There are lots of resources to help you prepare for the test on [the Lawyer Portal](#) and links to books to help with practice questions.

As part of the preparation LNAT recommend you read a broadsheet newspaper like the Times or The Guardian to keep abreast of current political/ legal issues, that may come up in essay questions.

## How do I know if a university has a good reputation for law?

University subject league tables like the Complete University Guide, The Guardian and Times Good University Guide are compiled every year and take into account a range of factors such as; student satisfaction and graduate employability to rate the subjects. These should not be your only tool, but they can help you get started.

## How do I provide evidence for my personal statement?

- Try to find a law related work placement in year 12. This can be quite competitive so make sure you apply early.
- Choose to do an EPQ related to Law or a free [MOOC](#) on a law related subject. You can then write about it in your statement.
- Go and sit in on a court case. You can get more information about visiting a court [here](#).
- Discuss a 'current' law issue that you have found interesting – for inspiration you can find 'hot topics' in the law sections of newspapers like the Times – eg with the pandemic there maybe discussions re the legality of certain behaviours.

## After a law degree.

Many law graduates do not go onto train as a solicitor or barrister – although they may go into a career where it is useful to have legal skills and knowledge. See what sorts of jobs they go into [here](#).

## Law careers

### Solicitor

After September 2021 you **will not** need a law degree or graduate conversion course to train to be a solicitor – you can get in with any degree – although law maybe an advantage - it will not provide any exemptions to the professional training and experience.



## Barrister

At the moment you need an LLB Law degree or the graduate conversion course to train to be a barrister.

Not sure which one will suit you? Take this solicitor or barrister [quiz](#) to find out which one is right for you.

### Training as a solicitor from 2021

From September 2021 the qualifications and training for solicitors will change. A graduate in any degree subject or an apprentice in law will be able to train as a solicitor on the job.

The new exam and assessment system is called the [Solicitor Qualification Examination SQE](#).

[This useful film](#) explains what it is and how it will work.

- Under the new system there will be two sets of exams testing legal knowledge and legal skills.
- Candidates will also have to do two years of work experience, but they will be able to gain that experience from up to four different legal employers.
- You will also be able to work in a different role - such as a paralegal or legal executive whilst you gain the legal experience and take your exams.

### Training to be a barrister is changing too

Qualifying as a barrister has changed too. From 2020 it will be possible to do the training in a range of ways over a longer time. From the traditional three step pathway [explained below], to routes that permit the vocational component to be done in two parts or integrate the academic and vocational path followed by work experience. An apprenticeship pathway is also being planned.

1. **An academic component** - typically a LLB law degree or an unrelated degree and then the conversion [Graduate Diploma in Law](#)
2. **A vocational component** – [the Bar Training Course](#). This takes one year full time or two years part time and is offered by a range of universities and training providers. This can be integrated into a Law Masters postgraduate course making it eligible for a post graduate student loan. You will need at least a 2:1 degree and may need to sit an aptitude test.
3. **A work based component** – trainee barristers need to find a one year ‘pupillage’ which usually takes place in a barristers’ chambers. Pupillage involves shadowing a barrister before getting involved in the practical work of chambers and taking on your own clients. This film shows what candidates need to do to prepare for [‘pupillage’](#) interviews.

According to the Bar Standards Board (BSB) the new qualification rules make training to become a barrister more flexible, accessible and affordable than ever before. What's more the changes will also provide the Bar with a more diverse pool of talent while giving students the power to choose between different routes to qualification.

To find out more about the training and costs go to the [Bar Council](#) and [Chambers student](#).

### Apprenticeships in Law

Over the last few years the number of law firms offering apprenticeships to school leavers has grown and you can now train to be a paralegal, legal executive or solicitor through an apprenticeship.

Depending on the route you take after paralegal training some firms offer you the chance to qualify as a solicitor within six years and take the [Solicitors Qualifying Examination](#).

## What are apprenticeship entry requirements?

- You need to be 18
- 5 GCSEs 4 and above including English and maths.
- Level 3 qualifications such as three A levels or relevant BTEC qualifications such as Business.
- The grades required can vary from 96 – 144 UCAS points [CCC – AAA]
- Related law work experience very useful
- Non law part time jobs, work experience also useful.

## What does an apprenticeship involve?

You will spend the majority of time learning on the job developing your legal skills and knowledge about different aspects of law. 20% of your time you will be studying at an educational institution or online for law exams. You will also need to maintain an up to date online portfolio as evidence of the work you have undertaken and the experience you have gained.

## Getting started

There are some apprenticeship opportunities with law firms to start on a level 7 degree apprenticeship training to be a solicitor, over 6 years.

Other companies start by offering an apprenticeship to train to be a paralegal which takes 2 years And then may progress on to a 4 year solicitor apprenticeship at level 7 or may take a route which includes the Chartered legal executive first.

This [national firm](#) is offering a level 3 through distance learning and the chance to progress on to a level 4 in Chartered legal executive apprenticeship afterwards.

[This Bristol firm](#) offers the level 3 in partnership with a university BPP and also the chance to do the Certificate in Legal practice at level 4 which is equivalent to the first year of a degree. They are then offering the chance to progress on to a four year degree apprenticeship training to be a solicitor.

Some students like to do the training in stages as they can then decide to stay as a paralegal if they want.



## What sort of things could you be doing on a paralegal apprenticeship?

- Administration – such as writing letters to clients, drafting and copying legal documents and proofreading them to check for mistakes.
- Researching different aspects of law for your clients or colleagues.
- Attending interviews with clients and preparing and attending court proceedings

## How much money can you earn?

Depending on the apprenticeship you could be starting on between £15000 and £19000 per year.

## Any downsides to an apprenticeships?

If you would like to train to be a barrister then there isn't currently a route from the apprenticeship pathway. However, it is being discussed and planned, so it is likely to be possible in the future.

Many apprenticeships work for companies specialising in corporate or business law. So if you go down this route you may not get the opportunity to gain experience in criminal law.

Apprenticeships in law are very competitive and there are often only a couple of places available in one company – so may need to consider applying for university too.

### Where to find Legal Apprenticeship vacancies?

These are advertised on the '[find an apprenticeship](#)' government site. It is also worth looking at company websites of local law firms to see whether they run an apprenticeship programme.

There are also national sites you can look for opportunities:

- [Law Careers.net](#)
- [Chambers student – list of who offers paralegal/ solicitor apprenticeships](#)
- [BPP – run law apprenticeship programmes](#)

These tend to follow the same application timetable as the university applications, so often the closing dates are in January.

### How to improve your chances of getting an apprenticeship

- Gain good grades in your A levels/ BTEC qualifications.
- Try to get law related work experience in year 12 – you may need to travel to find it!
- Make sure you know what type of law the company you are applying to does, to avoid making any slip ups in the application form or interview. For example, sometimes students talk about wanting to work in criminal law in an interview when the law firm they are applying to only does commercial or corporate law. As most apprenticeships are in these areas make sure you know what they involve.
- All law firms ask for 'commercial awareness'. These are some ways you can demonstrate this by; doing a part time job, listening to business-related podcasts, reading business publications such as the Financial Times and The Economist, watching Newsnight and Dragon's Den.

### How to Apply for Legal Apprenticeships

Much like with any job, the application process will vary from firm to firm. Some may require that you submit a CV and a cover letter, while others may have their own application questions you'll have to answer on an online form.

When applying for legal apprenticeships, it's important to make sure you tailor your application to the specific firm, giving reasons why you'd be suitable for that company.

### Useful Law Career websites

- [Chambers Student](#) – how do you become a barrister and extensive information about training to be a barrister and personal stories.
- [The Lawyer Portal](#) – everything you need to know about getting into law – from the differences between being a solicitor and a barrister, personal statements for law, LNAT and training routes.

- [Law Careers.net](#) – also advertises apprenticeship vacancies
  - [The Beginners Guide to a Career in Law](#)
  - [Law Apprenticeships Guide 2020](#)
- The University of Law produces interesting and useful careers resources too:
- [Career in law guide](#)
  - [Law students talking](#) – interesting podcasts re careers and law.