

# How to Crack a Law Firm Interview

Key questions, model answers, and preparation checklist

Use this checklist to prepare for law firm interviews at every stage — vacation schemes, training contracts, associate roles, and lateral hires. Work through each section, practise your answers aloud, and tick every box before interview day.

## 1. BEFORE THE INTERVIEW — PREPARATION CHECKLIST

- Researched the firm's practice areas, key clients, and recent deals or cases
- Read the firm's website, Legal 500 and Chambers & Partners profiles
- Reviewed your own CV and cover letter — be ready to discuss every line
- Prepared at least three specific reasons why you want this firm over others
- Practiced answers to common competency questions out loud
- Prepared two or three intelligent questions to ask the interviewer
- Confirmed interview format: in-person, virtual, panel, or assessment centre
- Planned your outfit — business formal unless told otherwise
- Confirmed time, location or video link, and name of interviewer(s)

## 2. MOTIVATION QUESTIONS

### Q Why do you want to be a solicitor / barrister?

**Model Answer:** Focus on a specific moment or experience that confirmed your interest in law — a work placement, a module, or a real case you followed. Connect it to the intellectual rigour and client impact of legal work. Avoid clichés like 'I've always wanted to help people.'

### Q Why this firm specifically?

**Model Answer:** Reference the firm's specific practice areas, landmark transactions, pro bono work, or culture. Show you have done genuine research — mention a deal, a publication, or a value that aligns with your own. Never give an answer that could apply to any firm.

### Q Why this practice area?

**Model Answer:** Explain your interest through a concrete example — a module, a placement, or a piece of news. Show you understand what the work involves day-to-day, not just in theory.

**Q Where do you see yourself in five years?**

**Model Answer:** *Frame your answer around growth within the firm — developing expertise in your chosen practice area, taking on greater client responsibility, and contributing to the team. Show ambition without appearing to use the firm as a stepping stone.*

 **Motivation Tip**

- Every answer should be firm-specific — vague answers are the most common interview mistake
- Prepare at least one reference to a recent deal, case, or publication from the firm
- Show genuine curiosity about the work — partners can tell the difference

### 3. COMPETENCY QUESTIONS — USE THE CAR METHOD

**CAR = Context → Action → Result.** Structure every competency answer with a clear situation, the steps you took, and the measurable outcome.

**Q Tell me about a time you worked under pressure to meet a deadline.**

**Model Answer:** *Describe a real deadline — academic, work, or extracurricular. Explain what made it pressured, the specific steps you took to manage your time and prioritise, and the outcome. Quantify where possible: 'submitted 48 hours early' or 'completed all three deliverables on time.'*

**Q Give an example of working effectively in a team.**

**Model Answer:** *Choose an example where you played a defined role within a group — not just 'we all worked together.' Highlight how you communicated, resolved any friction, and what the team achieved. Legal teams value reliability and clear communication.*

**Q Describe a time you had to analyse a complex problem.**

**Model Answer:** *Use a legal or analytical example where possible — a moot problem, a research task, or a real scenario from a placement. Walk through how you broke the problem down, identified the key issues, and reached a conclusion.*

**Q Tell me about a time you showed leadership.**

**Model Answer:** *Leadership does not require a formal title. Use an example where you took initiative, motivated others, or guided a project. Focus on the impact of your actions, not just the fact that you led.*

**Q Describe a situation where you had to persuade someone.**

**Model Answer:** *Choose a professional or academic example. Explain the other person's position, your reasoning process, how you framed your argument, and whether you succeeded — or what you learned if you did not.*

 **Competency Tip**

- Prepare at least six CAR examples covering: pressure, teamwork, leadership, analysis, persuasion, and failure
- Each example should be from a different context — avoid repeating the same story
- Practise keeping each answer to 90–120 seconds when spoken aloud

## 4. COMMERCIAL AWARENESS QUESTIONS

**Q Tell me about a recent legal or commercial development that interests you.**

**Model Answer:** *Choose a story from the past three months — a regulatory change, a major M&A deal, a court ruling, or a market shift affecting the firm's sector. Explain what happened, why it matters legally and commercially, and what impact it could have on clients or the firm.*

**Q What are the biggest challenges facing law firms today?**

**Model Answer:** *Discuss two or three: technology and AI disruption, pricing pressure from clients, talent retention, globalisation of legal services, or regulatory change. Show you understand the business of law — not just the practice of it.*

**Q How would you explain [complex legal concept] to a client with no legal background?**

**Model Answer:** *Use plain English, a simple analogy, and avoid jargon. This tests client communication skills. Practise explaining concepts like injunctions, indemnity clauses, or judicial review in two or three sentences.*

 **Commercial Awareness Tip**

- Read the Financial Times, The Lawyer, and Legal Week regularly in the weeks before your interview
- Follow the firm's social media and press releases for firm-specific news
- Know the firm's top five clients and the industries they operate in

## 5. STRENGTHS, WEAKNESSES & SELF-AWARENESS

**Q What is your greatest strength?**

**Model Answer:** *Choose one genuine strength — attention to detail, analytical thinking, or written communication — and back it with a specific example. Avoid generic answers like 'I am a hard worker.' Show rather than tell.*

**Q What is your greatest weakness?**

**Model Answer:** *Be honest — interviewers see through fake weaknesses like 'I work too hard.' Choose a real area of development, explain the steps you are taking to address it, and show self-awareness. End on progress, not the problem.*

**Q** Tell me about a time you failed or made a mistake.

**Model Answer:** *Show maturity and self-reflection. Describe the mistake clearly, take ownership without deflecting blame, explain what you learned, and what you did differently as a result. Resilience and growth are what interviewers want to see.*

## 6. QUESTIONS TO ASK THE INTERVIEWER

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- What does a typical day look like for a trainee / associate in this team?
- How does the firm support professional development and continuing education?
- What qualities do your most successful trainees / associates share?
- How has the firm's work in [practice area] evolved over the past few years?
- What are the next steps in the process and the expected timeline?

**⚠** *Avoid asking about salary, holiday, or hours at a first interview.*

## 7. ON THE DAY — FINAL CHECKLIST

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- Arrived or logged on 5–10 minutes early
- Brought copies of CV, cover letter, and any required documents
- Maintained professional body language: upright posture, eye contact, firm handshake
- Listened carefully — paused before answering rather than rushing
- Avoided filler words: 'um', 'like', 'you know'
- Thanked the interviewer at the end and confirmed next steps
- Sent a follow-up thank-you email within 24 hours

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