

Deciding on a legal career can be a challenge, especially when there are so many law jobs on offer. To help you make an informed choice here's a breakdown of available jobs in the sector.

Solicitor

You'll be a confidential adviser that has direct contact with clients, combining expertise and people skills to provide legal guidance and assistance. Once qualified, you can work in private practice, in-house for a commercial or industrial organisation, in local or central government or in the court service.

If you have a qualifying law degree, you need to do the [Legal Practice Course \(LPC\)](#) and then a training contract. If your undergraduate degree isn't in law you'll need to do the [Graduate Diploma in Law \(GDL\)](#) first. However, in 2021 the way that solicitors qualify is set to change with the introduction of the [Solicitors Qualifying Examination \(SQE\)](#).

Barrister

Passion, dedication and hard work are just three of the qualities needed for a career at the Bar.

From providing specialist legal advice to representing clients in court, your tasks will vary depending on your area of expertise. You'll advise clients on the law and the strength of their case, hold conferences with clients to discuss their situation and provide legal advice, represent clients in court by presenting the case, examining witnesses and giving reasons why the court should support the case, and negotiate settlements with the other side.

Barristers' clerk

Also known as practice assistants or assistant practice managers, barristers' clerks are responsible for running the administration and business activities of a barrister's chambers. You need to be familiar with court procedures and etiquette and develop an expertise in the type of law undertaken by your chambers.

A successful clerk has commercial acumen, legal knowledge and strong interpersonal skills. You shouldn't think of this as a route to becoming a barrister, as chambers may not offer a pupillage to someone who has been working for them as a clerk due to a conflict of interest.

Chartered legal executive

As a qualified lawyer you'll have your own client files and, as a fee-earner in private practice, your work is charged directly to the client. This is an important difference between chartered legal executives and other legal support staff.

Only those who have completed the Chartered Institute of Legal Executives (CILEx) training programme can use the title of chartered legal executive.

The academic course is split into two sections: CILEx Level 3 Professional Diploma in Law and Practice, which takes two years and is equivalent to an A-level; and the two-year CILEx Level 6 Professional Higher Diploma in Law and Practice, which is at honours degree level and is the final stage of academic training.

Paralegal

You can offer legal services but aren't qualified as a solicitor, barrister or chartered legal executive. Traditionally, you didn't need qualifications to refer to yourself as a paralegal, but employers now demand some form of training or qualification.

Paralegals don't just work for solicitors, but if they do then larger firms expect solid [work experience](#), especially if you haven't completed a law degree or the LPC. You'll also need an understanding of the client and sector, good people and networking skills, to be a methodical problem solver and the ability to analyse information and look at possible implications.

Licensed conveyancer

These are property law specialists who work on behalf of clients buying or selling property in England and Wales. You'll deal with all legal matters, administration, finance and queries involved in a property transaction.

This area of work is open to graduates with any degree, but to become a licensed conveyancer in England and Wales, you must pass the Council for Licensed Conveyancers (CLC) qualification, which is usually taken while working.

Legal secretary

It's your job to ensure the office runs smoothly by providing administrative support to solicitors and legal executives. You'll produce wills and contracts, accompany solicitors to court or police stations or deal with clients.

The ability to type accurately and quickly, a good eye for detail and discretion are skills you'll need to succeed.

Judge

It's up to you to control trials and hearings in your courtroom. You need to look at the evidence, interpret the law and make an impartial decision in favour of one of the parties. In criminal cases you'll also decide what sentence to give a defendant if they're convicted.

You can't become a judge straight after graduation as you need significant experience as a solicitor or barrister first. This is followed by some part-time work supervised by an experienced judge.

Usher

In charge of preparing the courtroom, ushers check that everyone is present and call defendants and witnesses into court. There are also 'sworn ushers' who accompany the jury to and from the courtroom and pass messages between the jury and the judge.

As the first point of contact, you'll need effective communication and people skills. You'll also need to be discreet, as a lot of the information you'll hear is confidential. The ability to follow instructions and an assertive and tactful manner are also important.