

Lawyer interview checklist

Law firm interviews usually start with an HR or recruitment call, then one or two rounds with a senior associate and a partner, and often a short drafting or research test.

10 QUESTIONS TO PRACTISE OUT LOUD

1. How do you approach drafting a commercial contract from scratch?

What it checks: Whether you understand the deal before writing, use a logical structure, and protect the client instead of copying a template clause by clause.

2. Tell me about a time a partner found a serious error in your draft.

What it checks: Whether you own mistakes quickly, fix them properly, and change your process so the same error does not happen again.

3. Why do you want to join our firm and this practice area?

What it checks: Whether you have researched the firm's practice and can connect your experience and interests to the work it actually does.

4. What do you review in legal due diligence for a company acquisition?

What it checks: Whether you know the core areas of a due diligence review and can separate deal-breaking risks from routine findings in a clear report.

5. Describe a time a client pushed you to do something you thought was improper.

What it checks: Whether you hold ethical lines with clients while still keeping the relationship and finding a lawful way to meet their goal.

6. What are your salary expectations as an associate?

What it checks: Whether you know market ranges for your year of call and city, and can state a figure calmly with some flexibility.

7. How do you protect client confidentiality in day-to-day practice?

What it checks: Whether you understand privilege and professional duties, and whether your everyday habits with email, documents and conversations actually keep client information safe.

8. Tell me about a difficult negotiation with opposing counsel.

What it checks: Whether you prepare, stay professional under pressure, and know which points to trade and which to protect for your client.

9. Are you comfortable with long hours and travel to other courts?

What it checks: Whether you have realistic expectations about the working pattern of legal practice and will stay reliable during busy periods.

10. What is the difference between a representation, a warranty and an indemnity?

What it checks: Whether you understand how these contractual protections differ in purpose and remedy, and can explain which one a client actually needs in a deal.

TIPS FOR THIS INTERVIEW

- Carry two short drafting samples you are proud of, with client names removed, and be ready to explain every clause choice you made.

- Revise the basics that come up often: limitation, jurisdiction, interim relief, contract remedies and professional ethics, even if you now practise mainly on the corporate side.
- For each matter on your CV, prepare one line on the issue, your role and the outcome, because partners often pick a matter and ask detailed questions.
- Read the firm's recent publications and know its main practice areas, so your answer on why this firm is specific rather than generic.

THE DAY BEFORE

- ☐ Confirm the time, venue or video link and the interviewer's name
- ☐ Plan your route and leave time for traffic, or test your camera, microphone and internet
- ☐ Keep copies of your resume, ID proof, certificates and photographs in a folder
- ☐ Iron your clothes and charge your phone and laptop
- ☐ Do one final run-through of your introduction, then stop and rest

ON THE DAY

- ☐ Arrive 15 minutes early, or log in 5–10 minutes early for a video call
- ☐ Greet everyone politely, including the receptionist or coordinator
- ☐ Listen to the full question, pause, then answer in a clear structure
- ☐ Take brief notes of names and key points
- ☐ Ask your prepared questions and confirm the next steps before you leave