

Exploring Careers Through Technical Routes

Legal Secretary



The Industry

A legal secretary provides administrative support for lawyers, solicitors and legal executives. Every law firm, financial company or barrister's chamber requires a good legal secretary to ensure the office runs efficiently, allowing employers to focus on serving their clients. If you're working in a small local firm you could develop experience in a wide range of legal matters, however in a larger firm you will tend to specialise in one particular area of law.

Legal secretaries: help produce legal documents such as wills, contracts and court papers; deal with enquiries from clients; prepare court forms and statements; deliver and collect documents; attend court or police cells with solicitors.

As well as opportunities to work in a solicitor's office or a barrister's chamber you could also work for the law court, local authority, estate agent or the police.

Institute of Legal Secretaries and PAs (ILSPA)
The Chartered Institute of Legal Executives (CILEX) www.cilex.org.uk

Skills and Requirements

Legal secretaries require general office skills as well as specialised skills unique to the legal profession. These include:

- Experience of office work
- A good work ethic with the ability to handle the pressure of a busy office
- Familiarity with legal terminology, court filing rules, basic legal procedure and law office protocol
- Drive, initiative and versatility with an ability to manage your workload and keep to deadlines
- Excellent computer skills showing proficiency with word processing, spreadsheets, legal research, presentations and time/billing software
- Discretion to handle confidential client files and data
- A pleasant and friendly attitude to people
- Excellent written communication skills with attention to detail e.g. spelling, proofreading
- Compassion as clients will entrust your law firm with issues that are personal or critical issues.

'The market for legal secretaries is becoming ever more competitive, and salaries will continue to increase for as long as there is a shortfall. More and more, companies are putting structured progression systems in place to ensure they keep the best staff for as long as possible.'

Source: <http://www.hays.co.uk>

Exploring Careers Through Technical Routes

Working and Learning as a Legal Secretary



Job Roles & Progression

Temporary office work is a good way of getting relevant work experience to enter this career.

Study Programme

Levels 2 and 3
Business Studies.



Further study

Level 2
Legal Secretaries.
Level 3
Legal Secretaries.
Higher Diploma
Administrative & Secretarial
Procedures.



Apprenticeships

Law (Paralegal).
Law (Chartered Legal Executive).



Career roles

Senior secretary.
Personal assistant for a top lawyer.
Legal executive or Paralegal.
Licensed Conveyancer.
Train as a solicitor or barrister.

Calculation including problem solving

Tasks

1. Calculate the length of time a taxi will take to get to a court hearing.
2. Plan your daily tasks to ensure all priorities and deadlines are met.
3. Track the total amount of time each lawyer spends on a case and calculate totals for invoicing purposes.
4. Prepare a client's invoice based on the services they have received including VAT where applicable.
5. Estimate the total expenses a lawyer has incurred over a month, and calculate the exact total.

Links to GCSE Maths

1. **Number** (subtraction; multiplication).
Geometry and measure (units of measure - speed, time).
2. **Number** (approximation - estimation).
Ratio (direct and inverse proportion - calculating amounts using proportion).
3. **Number** (whole numbers - addition, multiplication; converting between fractions, decimals and percentages).
Ratio (sharing in a given ratio).
4. **Number** (whole numbers - addition).
Ratio (percentages - calculating amounts using proportions; calculating percentages of amounts, increasing an amount by a percentage).
5. **Number** (whole numbers - addition, subtraction, multiplication; approximation - estimating calculations).

Communication, all forms

Tasks

1. Discuss and prepare the documents your lawyer requires to take to a court hearing.
2. Talk to a bereaved client whilst they are waiting for the lawyer to be ready to see them.
3. Take accurate minutes at a partners' meeting.
4. Prepare a court form and collect statements from the relevant parties concerned.
5. Research a topic as directed by a lawyer.

Links to GCSE English Language

1. **Spoken language** (speaking and listening - audience and purpose, discussion skills).
2. **Spoken language** (speaking; personal presence - body language; voice).
3. **Writing** (writing non-fiction - minutes; vocabulary - use precise verbs, literary techniques - informative language).
Spelling, punctuation and grammar.
4. **Spoken language** (speaking and listening).
Writing (writing non-fiction; vocabulary - to create a particular effect).
5. **Analysing non-fiction** (non-fiction text type; context - examples of context).
Comparing texts (how to compare texts - structuring a comparison response).