

## What is a Lawyer?

Written by Administrator  
Friday, 15 November 2013 21:37

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A lawyer, also known as an “attorney,” “counselor,” solicitor,” “barrister” or “advocate,” is an individual licensed by the state to engage in the practice of law and advise clients on legal matters. Lawyers act as both advocates and advisors on behalf of their clients. As advocates, they represent either the plaintiff (the party filing the lawsuit) or the defendant (the party defending the lawsuit), advancing their client’s case through oral argument and through written documents such as motions and briefs. As advisors, lawyers counsel clients on how the facts of their particular case apply to the law. **Jo**

### **Job Duties of Litigation Attorneys:**

Lawyers’ roles vary greatly, depending upon their practice environment and field of specialization. Litigation attorneys, also called trial attorneys, represent clients regarding legal disputes which are resolved through a lawsuit, mediation or negotiated settlement. Daily responsibilities include interviewing clients, rendering legal advice, performing legal research, taking depositions, attending site inspections, arguing motions before a judge, and drafting legal documents including pleadings, discovery, motions and briefs.

### **Job Duties of Transactional Attorneys:**

Corporate attorneys, also known as transactional lawyers, advise clients in connection with a transaction. They structure and negotiate business transactions, perform due diligence, draft transactional documents, counsel clients, prepare and submit materials to governmental bodies, perform legal research, supervise closings and draft a variety of legal documents including contracts, resolutions, legal opinions and escrow trust agreements. Corporate lawyers work on “deals” rather than “cases” and advocate in board rooms rather than courtrooms.

### **Education:**

Lawyers complete a minimum of seven years’ post-high school education in order to become qualified to practice law. This education includes a four-year undergraduate degree and three

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years of law school (or four years in a part-time law school program). Lawyers must also pass a bar examination for each state in which they wish to practice as well as an ethics examination in most states.

### **Skills:**

While attorneys are a diverse group with different backgrounds and personalities, a number of skills are common to most successful lawyers. A few of these skills are exceptional oral and written communication skills, strong analytical skills, the ability to simultaneously balance multiple tasks, leadership skills, the ability to empathize with a client's situation and a strong work ethic. Lawyers must also follow strict ethical guidelines and client confidentiality rules.

### **Practice Environments:**

Three out of four lawyers work in private practice either in a law firm or solo practice. Lawyers also work in private industry, the government, the judiciary, education, and public interest organizations.

### **Salary:**

Lawyer compensation varies greatly depending on a lawyer's practice setting, geographic location, demand for that specialty, the state of the legal job market and practice setting. In May 2004, the median annual earnings of all lawyers were \$94,930 and the middle half of the occupation earned between \$64,620 and \$143,620 according to the U.S. Department of Labor. While starting salaries for attorneys in large metropolitan law firms such as Boston and New York range from \$135,000 to \$160,000, attorneys in the public sector, such as public defenders and district attorneys, earn much less.

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### **Job Outlook:**

The job market for lawyers is projected to grow due to increased demand for legal services, population growth, new corporate compliance regulations, globalization and increased business activity. Factors that may impact the market for attorneys include a shift toward using accounting firms, paralegals, and overseas legal vendors in an effort to reduce legal costs as well as the expanding role of alternative dispute resolution.

*By Sally Kane / about.com*