



Associate  
Lawyers guide  
to interviewing  
in law firms

## Introduction

Congratulations on your upcoming law firm interview! Now, let's get you prepared so the nerves don't get you on the day.

Depending on the interviewer and the law firm, the format of the interview will differ. There are behavioural type interviews, competency based interviews, formal interviews, informal interview (coffee chats) and virtual interviews.

Whatever the style or format, it is essential that you do your homework and prepare. The investment of time and effort you put in before an interview will always pay off.

The first step you should take is to speak to your Taylor Root recruiter and gather as much information about the role and the company as possible.

As a leading specialist legal search and recruitment consultancy, Taylor Root are experts at interviewing lawyers at all levels. Our job is to deliver a diverse slate of exceptional candidates with the qualifications necessary to meet the client's needs and, as best as possible, the personality that will fit well within the organisation's culture.

With vast experience and global reach, we help lawyers to develop and progress their careers, both here in Australia and across the globe.

To help you prepare, we have compiled some of the most common questions asked in law firm job interviews, as well as some tips and tricks to help you master the interview and put your best foot forward.

Naturally, all interviews are different, so if you have any further questions, please contact one of our Taylor Root consultants.



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## Questions you may be asked during your law firm interview

Preparing your responses to common interview questions can help you offer strategic and knowledgeable replies.



### General interview questions

These questions help a hiring partner get to know you a little more by understanding your passions, interests and how you may fit into the firm's culture.

- Why do you want to practice law?
- Give us your 3 minute background story and why you are here
- What is one of your career highlights/successes?
- Why are you interested in this role?
- What most interests you about our firm?
- What are your strengths as a lawyer?
- What are your weaknesses?
- What do you like most about your current role?
- What do you dislike most about your current role?
- Why are you looking to leave your current firm?
- Where would you like to be career-wise five years from now?



### Competency interview questions

Competency based interview questions aim to test an individual for specific skills which are required to perform in the legal sector. They're designed to assess a candidate against a standard set of competencies required for a role.

Asking these questions enables employers to understand a candidate's past behaviours and experiences and are used as a basis to predict future behaviour and suitability for a job.

- Can you tell us about a time you worked as part of a team?
- What is your preferred management style?
- What would you do if you feel a senior member of staff has given incorrect advice?
- What is the biggest mistake you have made and how did you deal with it?
- How do you prioritise/manage your workload?
- How do you motivate yourself when the pressure is off?



### Behavioural interview questions

The purpose of behavioural interviewing is to objectively measure a potential employee's past behaviours as a predictor of future results. In behavioural interviews, candidates are asked to give specific examples of when they demonstrated particular behaviours or skills.

- Give us an example of a situation where you had to persuade another party to see your way of thinking
- Tell us about a time when you had to deliver a particular project or piece of advice in a very short time frame
- How have you gone about conforming with policies or directives that you do not agree with
- Talk us through a difficult situation when you have had to deal with conflict
- Is there a time when you foresaw potential issues with a piece of work or a project and how did you mitigate or prevent these issues?
- Tell us about a situation where you demonstrated real initiative
- What has been the most difficult challenge you have faced, and how did you solve it?





### Technical interview questions

Technical questions will form a major part of most law firms' recruitment processes and will usually involve a discussion centred on the matters listed on your CV.

Technical questions are often embedded in the main interview but in some recruitment processes a separate technical interview may be held with a Partner or knowledge management lawyer.

In these interviews, a case study or situation is given to you prior to the interview (often 30mins prior) which you will discuss during the technical questioning round.

Whether technical questions form part of the main interview or a separate round, the interviewer is seeking a deep understanding of the subject matter and applicable legislation beyond mere facts and issues. Interviewers are interested in your ability to grasp the broader context of why the law has been applied in a particular manner and how it aligns with your client's objectives, commercial considerations, and legal strategy.

These discussions will involve probing questions about relevant provisions of legislation, the rationale behind the drafting of specific documents, the reasoning behind the structure of a transaction, or the justification for a particular course of action

To prepare effectively, it is recommended to thoroughly review your CV and refresh your understanding of the matters you have worked on. For each transaction, deal, project or case listed on your CV, you should be able to discuss:

- The legal issues – refresh yourself on the relevant legislation
- The reasoning behind the structure of a transaction
- The parties involved
- Your role in the deal
- The justification for a particular course of action
- The value or ruling (if significant)

By demonstrating a deep understanding of the subject matter beyond mere facts and issues, you will feel more confident and well-prepared for any questions the interviewers may pose, thereby distinguishing yourself from other candidates.



## The Star Method

A technique you can use to prepare for behavioural and situational interview questions

The STAR method is a behavioural interview style where the interviewer is looking for you to discuss a specific **S**ituation, **T**ask, **A**ction and **R**esult. The STAR method helps you create an easy-to-follow story with a clear conflict and resolution. The STAR method is a valuable technique you can even apply to your answers for behavioural and competency interview questions.

On the right is what each part of the technique means and the approximate percentage of time to dedicate to each section.

No matter what stories you decide to share, make sure you define a situation, task, action and result, and showcase skills and abilities most relevant to the job.



### S

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#### Set the **Situation** (20%)

Explain the situation so that your interviewer understands the context of your example, they do not need to know every detail!

### T

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#### Explain your **Tasks**/involvement (10%)

Talk about the task that you took responsibility for completing or the goal of your efforts.

### A

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#### Present your **Actions** (60%)

Describe the actions that you personally took to complete the task or reach the end goal. Highlight skills or character traits addressed in the question.

### R

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#### Show off your **Results** (10%)

Explain the positive outcomes or results generated by your actions or efforts. Here, it is important to highlight quantifiable results. You may also want to emphasize what you learned from the experience or your key takeaways.

## Questions you should ask during the interview

Asking the right kinds of questions in an interview can show that you're genuinely interested in the role.

In seeking a job, it's important to remember that an interview isn't just an opportunity for the employer to find out if you are a suitable candidate - the interview works both ways. If you bring good interview questions for to the table, you'll find out quickly if the job is the right match for you. You'll also demonstrate to the hiring manager that you are interested and prepared and find out some insights as to whether they have any reservations about you for the role.

Good topics to ask about are:



### The organisation

Strategic goals, challenges they are facing, why do the interviewer(s) enjoy working there, most significant recent developments in the firm/organisation, etc.



### The working conditions

Opportunities, career development, how is performance evaluated, etc.



### The process

What happens next, how many people are being interviewed, do they fill open positions from within the firm/organisation first, etc.

Avoid asking questions that have been answered for you during the interview. Do not ask anything you should already know from details they have sent you.

These are examples of some great questions to ask at an interview:



If I were to start working in this position today, what sorts of matters would I be working on?



What will be my biggest challenge in this role?



What are the opportunities for growth within this role?



How would you describe the firms culture and working environment?



What is your time frame for making a decision on this role and what are next steps?

If appropriate, try to weave your questions in as the interview is progressing. It demonstrates to the interviewer that you're proactive and engaged in the process.

## About Taylor Root

We are a global legal search and recruitment consultancy and have been a market leader for more than 30 years.

We help global law firms and businesses to build and expand their legal, risk, compliance and corporate governance functions. Whether you're hiring your first In-house Counsel, expanding your associate team in a certain practice area or expanding your risk department internationally, we partner with businesses at every step of your journey.

Our services include contingent and retained search, permanent, temporary and interim recruitment as well as consultancy solutions.

Wherever we operate we have made an impact, from Düsseldorf to Dubai, New York to Shanghai or Milan to Melbourne. From pioneering specialist recruitment in particular locations, to shaping how our clients have approached hiring, our influence is evident everywhere.

Today, we have 16 international offices-a truly global network of search and recruitment experts. Put simply, no one can match our global reach, or our history.

## Get in touch

Contact one of our expert legal consultants – they have an extensive understanding of the markets that they cover.



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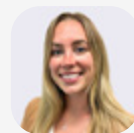
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