



SUCCESSFUL APPLICATIONS AND INTERVIEW TECHNIQUES

Application preparation

- Make sure you know about the firms' closing dates for both summer scheme and training contracts. Don't rely on the postal service delivering the next day!
- Research the firms and make sure you know the type of firm you would like to apply to. This way your applications will be much more focused.
- Obtain the recruitment brochures for the firms you are interest in applying to.
- Gather information from all sources e.g. directories and journals, but make sure you use the up-to-date material as things change regularly in the legal arena.
- Consult with your careers advisor or academic tutors who may know a lot about the firms.

Covering letters and CVs

- Not all firms request a covering letter, but if they do you should include one. Keep it brief. If you are asked to send in a handwritten letter make sure it is legible.
- Ensure it is addressed to the right person.
- Put the right letter, with the right form in the correct envelope.
- CVs should be kept to a maximum of two pages and look professional (white A4 paper and typed).
- Record the important information at the top ie who you are and where you can be contacted.
- A CV should be in reverse chronological order, ie your university details then school, followed by work experience and hobbies.
- Preparing a CV will help you think about what you've done so far and will help you to complete application form questions as a result.

Application forms

- The difference between a CV and an application form is that you can expand more about yourself on a form.
- You must answer the questions you are asked as the recruiter is trying to get a 'pen-picture' of you.
- Answer questions fully and don't be tempted to write 'refer to my attached CV'.
- Keep it neat and ensure the spelling and grammar are accurate.

- Take a copy of the form first and complete the copy. Once you're happy with what you've said you can go on to the actual form. Don't forget to take a copy of the completed form.

Online forms

- Be very careful if cutting and pasting! Don't leave the wrong firm's name in.
- Make sure you save frequently.
- When checking the form, print it off to read through, it is easier to spot spelling and grammatical errors this way. Ask someone else to read it as well just to double check.
- Ensure grades are correct if using drop-down bars. If asking for university grades give the percentage mark, not simply 2.1, 2.2 etc.
- Print the completed form off to refer to before interviews.
- Save the confirmation email from the firm saying they've received the form.

The interview

- Try to relax and remember it is a two-way process. You are assessing the firm as much as the firm assessing you.
- Prepare in advance by researching the firm fully and have some questions to ask.
- Arrive punctually, but no more than 10 minutes before the start of the interview otherwise you will become too nervous.
- By adopting effective posture and breathing you can control the effects of nerves.
- Practise your handshake in advance of interviews so that you get it right.
- The legal profession is conservative. Therefore, make sure your image is in keeping with this.
- Take time to think about answers before delivering them. A pause will help you to gather your thoughts.
- Be confident in the way you sit and answer the questions, but be careful you don't go too far and appear arrogant.
- At the end of the interview thank the interviewers for their time and shake their hands.

After the interview

- If not offered a tour, ask to see the office.
- Talk to trainees if you can.
- Assess the working environment.
- Once away from the firm make a summary of your impressions so that you can effectively compare firms.

Reminders

- Be honest both on paper and in person - you will only be found out if you're not.
- Think about the profession and present yourself accordingly.
- Be pro-active and don't miss out because you cut the deadlines too finely.
- Your application can only be assessed on the information which is supplied. Therefore, if you have mitigating circumstances for a drop at academic attainment tell us.
- If you are using a cut and paste method make sure you paste the correct section on the correct form.
- Put the correctly addressed application in the envelope to the right firm.