

# Legal Interviewing Tips

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This page contains interviewing and resume tips for obtaining legal jobs in New York City. These topics about interviewing preparation are provided by [Legal Employment Agencies](#) a Filcro Legal Staffing Company.

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## Preparing for the interview

There are many ways to prepare for an interview. Missing one of these vital points could prevent you from getting your next job.

- Research the company and visit their web site. Do a Google or MSN search on the firm and see if they have been in the news recently or made their own announcements.
- Make sure the objective on your resume is within context of the company and the job you are applying for.
- Devote the majority of your resume to the work experience and skills most closely related to the position you are applying for.
- Verify your previous and current dates of employment and education prior to going on the interview. Law firms conduct 3<sup>rd</sup> party reference checks on your work experience, dates of employment, education and degrees received. Any discrepancy on your resume or application of employment will disqualify you. Many people lose jobs because of this. Any claims you make with regard to education and employment will be checked and verified.
- Make sure you have multiple copies of your resume. You might meet more than one person during the interviewing process and you should be prepared to hand each person a clean copy of your resume.
- Research the duties and correct title of the job you are applying for. There is a vast difference between a "Legal Assistant", "Legal Administrator" and "Legal Secretary". Know about the job you are applying for in detail.

## What to wear

- Keep it neat, clean and presentable. Make sure your outfit is ironed, clean and in good condition.
- Try to wear a matching suit or skirt suit, preferably dark colors.
- Keep shirts in solid colors.
- Make sure your shoes are shined and appropriate for a professional office setting.
- It is best to error on the side of being too conservative in your attire.

## Once you've arrived for your interview

- Shut off all cell phones prior to entering the building and do not turn them on until you leave the building.
- Fill out the company's application in its entirety. If you're taking the time to interview, take the time to fill out the application. Do not abbreviate words or skip sections. This is reflection of your work habits.
- When you greet your interviewer have a positive attitude. Approach with a smile and confidence. Extend your hand and introduce yourself, it's a good start. When seated make sure you have straight posture, interviewers read body language like words, sit up straight and tall. Do not talk with you hands; let your words do the work!
- When speaking with an interviewer utilize conventional English. Stay away from complex phraseology, slang and abundant multi-syllable word usage. It is extremely important to articulate your words clearly. The way you communicate on the interview is a reflection of how you will communicate with your new boss and your coworkers.

## Interviewing questions to be prepared for

***"Tell me about yourself."***

This is usually the opening question in an interview and they are basically asking "why should we hire you"? Your answers should be brief and relevant to your qualifications and experience related to the job you are applying for. Talk about your education, work history and skills. Use your resume as a starting point so the interviewer can follow along chronologically. Keep the topics and subject matter business related and professional at all times.

***"Why did you leave your most recent job?"***

Do not give a laundry list of reasons for leaving. Keep negative statements out of the conversation no matter what the circumstances in your

last position. Speaking negatively about previous employers or employees is not positive for you and will hamper your candidacy. Keep it short and focus on what you learned in your position and how you are ready to utilize those skills in a new position.

### ***"Where do you see yourself in five years?"***

What they really want to know is how long will you be committed to working for the company. Firms tend not to hire someone who will only be around for a year or two. Let the interviewer know that you're looking for stability. Also let them know that you're willing to take on additional responsibilities and learn new skills if it will help the firm.

### ***"What are your weak points?"***

What they want to know is how realistic and honest are you. You must turn a negative into a positive. Respond to this query by identifying areas in your work where you can improve and figure out how they can be a positive contribution to a future employer. If you didn't have the opportunity to develop certain skills or experience at your last job then you can explain how eager you are to gain that experience in a new position.

### ***"What do you know about our law firm?"***

This is one of the most important questions in an interview. It shows if you are serious about the opportunity. This goes back to doing your homework and preparing for the interview. Spend some time online (Google the company, read the articles, etc.) or at the library researching the law firm. The Martindale-Hubbell will help you find information including practice areas, size, income, reputation, public image, senior management, the firm's history, and philosophy. You want the interviewer to be confident that you know about the law firm but let the interviewer tell you about the company too. Keep your answers simple and to the point.

### ***"Why should we hire you?"***

Try and focus on what you can do for the law firm; the practice group or the individual attorney. If your strength is litigation, corporate law or real estate, make sure you talk about any similarities to your last position to the one you are applying for. The law firm should hire you because of your legal knowledge, abilities, legal experience and skills. Some law firms have outstanding reputations for the way they treat their employees and the type of work environment they provide. If you are interviewing with a top firm and are aware of their reputation, let them know. It's a privilege to work for the top law firms. Getting into the best firms requires knowledge of why these firms are so special. Your answers should be focused on your strengths and proven track record of a job well done.

### ***"What would you do for us? What can you do for us that someone else can't?"***

Give examples of past experiences in other law firms that show you have had success with similar responsibilities. Keep things positive and do not say anything negative about your previous employer, the law firm, a coworker or attorney. Always be complimentary and others will respect you for it. Be humble but talk about your skills and work ethic in an honest manner it will come across in the interview. Never exaggerate or embellish on your skills or experience.

### ***"What do you look for in a job?"***

An opportunity to utilize your skills, contribute to the law firm and to be recognized for a job well done. Talking about salary, benefits and or vacation here is not suggested. Everyone wants to be recognized for their work and dedication. Let the employer know that you don't need compliments every time you perform a task but if you perform well consistently, you like to know it's appreciated.

### ***"Give me your definition of the position for which you are being interviewed."***

Keep it brief. Use a definition that lists actions and expected results for the people you'll be working for. Legal secretaries, paralegals and other legal professionals have general duties that can be articulated very easily. Think of how you'll perform as a team member and independently. Making the day easier and more productive for the people you'll be working for is very important.

### ***"If you could choose any company to work for, where would you work?"***

Most law firms want to hear that you want to work for them. Talk about the law firm and the things you admire and respect. Tell them honestly without a lot of fluff. A firm's reputation, stability and an opportunity to be recognized for your work are always good reasons to be with a specific firm. Some will offer more responsibility, in time, if you earn it. Salary, benefits and vacation time should never be the focus here. Always concentrate on what your experience will be like in the office... not out of it.

## **Closing the Interview**

If you are asked, "Do you have any questions for us?" They are sometimes asking, "How interested you are in this position?"

Remember that the question(s) you ask here can be very negative or positive. If you just spent an hour talking about the firm's new computer system, don't ask them if the firm has a new computer system? The person will wonder if you were in the same interview. Be careful. Your question will indicate if you have been paying attention and listening during the interview. Ask a question relevant to your candidacy and how you can improve it.

If you want the job, it's best to ask the following type of questions:

- "I'm very interested in the job. Is there anything I can do to improve my chances of working for the firm?"
- "What are the next steps in your process?"
- "How would you prefer I follow up?"

- “May I supply my references?”

### Thank you note

Always send a thank you note. No matter what! It reinforces your candidacy and leaves the interviewer with positive thoughts about your follow up skills and social decorum. Both you and the interviewer have spent valuable time together. Always thank someone in a courteous manner for their time and consideration; they are both very valuable commodities.

On behalf of all of us at Filcro Legal Staffing, best of luck with your legal job search.

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 Manager of Legal Recruitment and Placement  
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 New York, NY 10175



### Resume Do's

- Submit your resume on standard 8 1/2 by 11 letter size, white paper.
- Maintain space between paragraphs, and allow for adequate margins.  
Utilize conventional English. Stay away from complex phraseology, slang and abundant multi-syllable word usage.
- Keep your paragraphs short and concise.
- Check and check again to assure that your resume, cover letter or e-mail enclosures are error-free.
- Keep your resume within context of the company and job you are applying for.
- List a few achievements at each one of your jobs and be prepared to discuss them in detail.
- Devote the majority of your resume to the most relevant job related to the position you are applying for.
- List memberships in industry organizations if related to the company and the position.
- Let those supplied as references know who might be calling, the position(s) you are applying for and a realistic timeframe to expect the calls.
- Each cover letter must be specific to the employer and position you are applying for.
- Most human resource professionals and senior level executives will have specific questions based on statements on your resume. Be prepared to justify and expand on everything.

### Resume Don'ts

- Keep negative statements to a minimum no matter what the circumstances in your last position. Speaking negatively about previous employers or employees is not positive for you and will hamper your candidacy. Be diplomatic.
- Minimize personal references to sports, gym memberships, knitting and pottery
- Never place your social security number, or personal philosophies about intergalactic travel on your resume. Your resume once submitted is in the public domain and secure or confidential information should be saved for a confidential application of employment or 3rd party reference check.
- Do not supply or offer references on your resume. The employer if interested will ask for them.
- Never submit a resume without checking the properties tab in Microsoft Word or PDF documents.
- Do not discuss prospective employment on your current company employer's time. It's not ethical.
- Your height, weight and physical appearance should not be on your resume.
- Never place a job objective on a resume not targeted to that job or company.
- Verbs like sparked, accelerated, and streamlined are fluff. Everyone knows it and so should you.
- Do not under any circumstance place your salary on your resume. Save it for the interview, application of employment or cover letter.

### [Understand Legal Jobs in Law Firms Before you Apply or Interview](#)

We advise legal secretarial, legal word processing and paralegal candidates seeking legal jobs in New York City law firms to examine real legal jobs to get a sense of perspective.

- [Legal Secretarial Jobs](#) - Filcro Legal Staffing
- [Legal Secretarial Jobs](#) - Law Firm People
- [Legal Word Processing Jobs](#) - Filcro Legal Staffing
- [Legal Word Processing Jobs](#) - Law Firm People
- [Paralegal Jobs](#) - Filcro Legal Staffing

- [Paralegal Jobs](#) - Law Firm People
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