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# What Are the Options For A Career in Law?

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Lawyers have a high public profile and a reputation which is sometimes reviled and sometimes respected. Law is now the most popular degree in the UK. We see many lawyers in popular television series, but what is the reality of a career in law? For the legally qualified who want to work in law, there are two main directions to take: barristers and solicitors.

## Barristers

Barristers represent clients in court. They receive their information and instructions through a client's solicitor. When not appearing in court, they work in chambers where they prepare their court cases and arguments. There are around 14,000 barristers in the UK, 11,500 of them being self-employed.

## Solicitors

Individuals, businesses and other organizations go to solicitors for advice and assistance on matters of law. Most solicitors form partnerships and work together in private practice. There are some 10,000 firms currently in private practice in the UK. There are several directions these practices can take.

## General practice

Most law practices are small or medium-sized firms and they carry out general practice work.

Typical areas of law include helping clients to buy and sell property, drafting wills and representing individuals in family law matters, such as divorce.

## Commercial firms

Commercial firms specialise in advising large corporate clients on multi-million pound transactions. They often have branch offices in a number of major financial and commercial centres around the world. Because of their size, they have highly qualified staff and can offer advice in various areas of law, such as company law, corporate finance, media and entertainment, and shipping.

## Niche practices

Niche practices specialise in a particular area of law. It's usually a more unusual area, such as media or sports law. For example, they may represent a famous footballer in contractual and sponsorship negotiations.

## Legal aid

Legal aid firms specialise in cases for people who cannot otherwise afford solicitors' fees. Legal aid solicitors concentrate on advising on issues such as divorce law, personal injury claims, and landlord and tenant issues. Criminal law legal aid solicitors attend police stations and help members of the public who have been arrested on suspicion of having committed a crime. A number of solicitors do some voluntary work in this area, as well as their paid job.

#### Other directions

Legal training is a valuable commodity outside the world of solicitors and barristers. Many qualified lawyers will work in central and local government, or as an in-house lawyer for large companies or organisations.

Others choose not to practice law, but to use their skills in other ways. Tony Blair is one famous example. Many employers value the skills people learn through legal training, such as the ability to research, collect and analyse large amounts of information; to weigh-up points and counter points; and to create a logical argument and reasoned conclusion from a set of facts. Legal training tends to result in discretion, the ability to handle and work under pressure, and an excellent memory; all these abilities are valued in the general career market.

For those who are interested in law, but do not follow the challenging academic route, there are many other work options. They include notaries, patent agents, chartered secretaries, barristers' clerks, legal secretaries, law costs draftsman, court workers and legal recruitment agents.

John Mce writes articles on a number of subjects including Legal jobs. Find local jobs in London and Edinburgh and elsewhere in the UK.

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