

MAYER • BROWN

Hints & tips

❖ A guide from Mayer Brown to help you through the trainee solicitor recruitment process.

About Mayer Brown

Mayer Brown is a leading global law firm with offices in major cities across the Americas, Asia and Europe. We have approximately 1,000 lawyers in the Americas, 300 in Asia and 500 in Europe. Our presence in the world's leading markets enables us to offer clients access to local market knowledge combined with global reach.

We are noted for our commitment to client service and our ability to assist clients with their most complex and demanding legal and business challenges worldwide. We serve many of the world's largest companies, including a significant proportion of the Fortune 100, FTSE 100, DAX and Hang Seng Index companies and more than half of the world's largest investment banks. We provide legal services in areas such as Supreme Court and appellate; litigation; corporate and securities; finance; real estate; tax; intellectual property; government and global trade; restructuring, bankruptcy and insolvency; and environmental.

Finding the firm that is right for you is one thing; securing your place as a trainee solicitor is something else altogether.

Here at Mayer Brown we don't claim to know it all but we think we know enough of what counts to make this little book essential reading. Good luck with your search and remember, if you want to know more, just ask.

Judge

THE RIGHT FIRM

❖ What kind of firm do you want to work for? Somewhere big and global? Somewhere slightly smaller, but with a better working culture? Or somewhere with a strong reputation in a particular practice area?

It is up to you to decide what matters most. Once you know that, there are a few different ways to find out which firms might be a good fit for you.

CAREERS SERVICES

Start here. Talk to an advisor about your skills and your plans. They will have literature from lots of firms for you to look at. They can also tell you about law firm recruitment days, skills sessions or presentations that are coming up. Later in the process, they can help you to complete your application form and prepare for your assessment.

CAREERS DIRECTORIES

There are lots of different publications available, in print and online. They will tell you things such as what type of work a firm does and how big they are. Some even have 'day in the life' style profiles. Your Careers Service will have different directories for you to look at that will help you to draw up your shortlist of firms.

LAW FAIRS

There are a number of Law Fairs in the autumn. They are a good way to meet the people you might end up working with, as well as trainees who have been in the same position as you. Get a feel for what life is really like (not just on paper).

OPEN DAYS

Most firms run Open Days, the best chance for you to have a nose around before joining. Meet a few partners, mingle with the current trainees and get some insider tips on making your application and how to impress at interview.

Click

THE APPLICATION

❖ Once you have found the right firm for you, the next step is making an application. There is more to this than form filling.

Here are some simple tips that have helped other people secure an opportunity at Mayer Brown.

THE APPLICATION

CHECK YOUR JUNK MAIL

Spam and junk email filters can stop important emails getting to your inbox (especially Hotmail, Gmail and Yahoo!). Either check your junk mailbox regularly, or change your settings.

DO A ROUGH DRAFT FIRST

Print off a few blank copies of the form. Work on a rough draft that you can refine for the final, clean copy. This will help you to gain an overall understanding of the information required, so you don't just write whatever springs to mind.

KEEP YOUR DETAILS UP-TO-DATE

If you change your email, phone number or address don't forget to tell us. We might need to get more information from you, or invite you to an assessment or interview. (If you are using a university email account, check how long it stays active after you graduate.)

ANSWER THE QUESTION

Try to tailor your answers to the questions on the form, and don't repeat yourself. We are looking for specific things, so if you dance around the question, we can't tell whether you have what we are looking for.

THE APPLICATION

SPEAK THE TRUTH

We check all of the references and grades you give us, so there is no point trying to enhance anything. Don't try to be someone you are not. You will impress us far more by being honest.

CHECK, CHECK, CHECK

Attention to detail is paramount for a legal career, as are strong communication skills. Mistakes on your form can really count against you. Ask someone else to proofread it for you.

KEEP A COPY

It is hard to remember what you wrote on your form by the time you get to interview. Make sure you keep a copy of your completed form so you can refresh your memory later.

FOLLOW-UP

We will send you a confirmation email within 24 hours of receiving your application. If you haven't heard from us, phone us to check whether we have received anything from you.

Shine

*If a firm likes the sound of you, they will want to know a lot more before making a decision.

Assessments can be stressful. Stay calm and consider some advice from people who have lived through them.

THE ASSESSMENT DAY

WRITTEN EXERCISE

WATCH THE CLOCK

Plan your time – some for reading and digesting, some for writing.

DON'T OVER-DRAFT

Get your thoughts down on paper quickly. Don't waste time on notes and outlines, just write.

MIND YOUR LANGUAGE

Communication skills are essential for a legal career. Be clear. Avoid jargon and overly complicated language.

REMEMBER YOUR AUDIENCE

Would you be happy to submit what you have written to a partner? It should be concise and considered.

GROUP EXERCISE

DON'T OBSESS OVER DETAILS

Take time to digest your material, but don't get bogged down. Split the reading between you and summarise for each other if you have got a lot to absorb.

MAKE A PLAN

Start by deciding how long you are going to spend on each part of the exercise, and stick to it.

STAY ON SCHEDULE

Assign a timekeeper to keep track of your time. (If you are the timekeeper, make sure you contribute to the exercise too.)

THE ASSESSMENT DAY

BE DIPLOMATIC

Don't be afraid to voice your opinion – but do it constructively. Make a suggestion, don't just tear apart someone else's idea.

SPEAK UP

Some people naturally speak up more than others in a group. Be sure to say something, but don't worry, we are looking for the quality of your contribution, not word count.

PAY ATTENTION

Active listening is another key skill. That means absorbing what is being said by others, and acknowledging them (nodding, smiling, eye contact).

ENCOURAGE OTHERS

Try to get the quieter group members to talk too, but don't put anyone on the spot. Try to be supportive.

PICK YOUR BATTLES

Some ideas are worth fighting for, and sometimes it is just about your own ego. We are looking for people who know what is really best for the good of the group.

Prime

THE INTERVIEW

❖ Clones don't interview very well. You don't want to be over rehearsed or scripted for your interview, but you still need to be well prepared. Here are some ideas that might help.

THE INTERVIEW

KNOW THE FIRM

Find out everything you can about the firm and the areas it specialises in. You don't need to memorise everything – but you should have a sense of their size, scope and identity, as well as how they differ from their competitors.

KNOW YOUR ROLE

Understand what you are applying for. Read some trainee profiles, visit Law Fairs and Open Days. Make sure you know what a trainee solicitor actually does.

KNOW YOURSELF

Know your strengths. Why would you fit in well here? What have you done in your life that has shaped who you are? Have some stories ready to share.

BE PUNCTUAL

Time management is critical. Leave yourself plenty of time to arrive, even if your transport fails you.

LOOK THE PART

We are not judging on style, but the way you present yourself is very important. Dress, body language and your tone of voice all contribute to that all-important first impression.

BE NATURAL

Try and relax and be yourself. We are all normal people, and we want to see you for who you really are. This will help to ensure that you are suited to the position of trainee solicitor.

THE INTERVIEW

THINK AHEAD

Don't rehearse your answers, but do have some thoughts and opinions ready. Think of positive answers to questions about your weaknesses.

BE POSITIVE

Have some faith in yourself. Confidence is a very attractive quality (in good measure). Own up to your faults but don't dwell on them, and resist the temptation to criticise unnecessarily.

ASK QUESTIONS

This is the one most people struggle with. The trick is not to over think it. Instead of trying to think up an 'intelligent' question, focus on asking things you genuinely want to know (and haven't found in your research).

GET FEEDBACK

It is not nice being turned down, but should that happen, take the opportunity to get feedback on your interview. It could make all the difference next time.

ABOUT US

We hope that our hints and tips have helped. ✦

If you would like to know more about us,
and whether we are the right firm for you,
you should find everything you need in
our trainee solicitor guide or by visiting
www.mayerbrown.com

You can also contact a member of the
Graduate Recruitment Team in London on

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✦Good luck.

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- Spain, Ramón & Cajal
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