



BOOKERS & BOLTON
SOLICITORS

How to Get the Most Out of Your Lawyer

Client Guide

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Be Prepared

Before you come and see a lawyer for the first time make sure you have all of the relevant facts and any necessary documents together and in some sort of order. This will save time as you explain the issues or instruct them.

Time is what costs you when visiting your lawyer and so it is best that you spend your time with them discussing their area of expertise – the law – without unnecessary administrative hold ups.

Bring ID and proof of address to the initial meeting.

Collect all of the documents you think you might need and put them in order BEFORE seeing your lawyer.

If you need to prove anything (like a salary or your ID) then gather the evidence (like a set of recent pay slips or your Passport) and put it all in a folder ready to bring with you.

Be Organised

Keep all of your papers together – including the information and correspondence we send you.

Make sure you return any documents as requested as soon as possible to avoid delays in your matter.



Let your lawyer know immediately if anything changes.

Know What You Want

What do you want the outcome of the visit to your lawyer to be and how much is that outcome worth? Is that outcome possible? Are you being realistic? Be especially careful if you are upset or angry about the matter as this can mean you lose focus of what you want to achieve by instructing them.

We suggest that you speak to impartial friends or family or a qualified counsellor or therapist to help you get your thoughts in order before instructing a lawyer if this is a particularly emotive issue. Lawyers make very expensive therapists and, whilst all of our team will be incredibly sympathetic, they are best used to advise you on the law!

There are many outcomes to consider and you, along with your lawyer, will have to decide if the benefits of any matter will outweigh the cost – both emotional and financial. Would it be worth acting on a case where you might be awarded £3000 but that costs you £2500 to win? Is it worth falling out with your neighbours over a few inches of land?

The law will often be quite clinical in making decisions about things – it won't matter who committed adultery when it comes to working out the finances of a divorce, for example.

Make a list of what you want to happen and think about how much you are prepared to pay to get that.

Lawyers make expensive therapists! Speak to someone impartial about your feelings before meeting with your lawyer.

ID at the Ready!

To comply with the law, we need to get evidence of your identity and proof of address at the beginning of the transaction. You will need to provide:

- One form of original photograph identification, such as your current passport or current photocard driving licence.

And

- An original copy of your most recent utility bill (e.g. telephone, gas, electricity, water) or bank statement/mortgage statement. This should not be more than 3 months old. This must prove your current address. A mobile phone bill is **not** accepted.

You should produce the originals to us and where you cannot produce the originals certified copies may be provided. Please produce them to our receptionist who will take copies.

You can certify a document as a true copy of the original by getting it signed and dated by a professional person, like a solicitor.

Copies of documents that can be certified include:

- passports
- photocard driving licences
- letters from a government department
- bank/building society or credit card statements
- gas, electricity or council tax bills
- letters from a hospital/doctor

Take one photo ID (passport or Driving Licence Photocard) and a copy of your most recent utility bill (e.g. telephone, gas, electric) or bank statement/mortgage statement (not more than 3 months old) to the office for your ID check immediately.

Who can certify a document?

To certify documents, ask a professional person or someone well-respected in your community (of good standing) like a:

- solicitor or notary
- The Post Office

The person you ask shouldn't be:

- related to you
- living at the same address
- in a relationship with you

How to certify a document

Take the photocopied document and the original and ask the person to certify the copy by:

- writing 'Certified to be a true copy of the original seen by me' on the document
- signing and dating it
- printing their name under the signature
- adding their occupation, address and telephone number

The person certifying the document may charge you a fee.

Certifying a Translation

If you need to certify a translation of a document that's not written in English or Welsh, ask the translation company to confirm in writing on the translation:

- that it's a 'true and accurate translation of the original document'
- the date of the translation
- the full name and contact details of the translator or a representative of the translation company
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Minimising Costs

We try to minimise costs to you, whilst not cutting corners on the quality of the legal advice you receive, by ensuring our practices are efficient and we have a range of support staff who take all of the non-legal tasks away from your lawyer.

There is always a receptionist to greet you and deal with your immediate enquiries or take in documents you want to leave. Every lawyer has a secretary who can also help deal with some of your enquiries.

If you have any issues with the running of your file, costs or administration then we also have a Practice Manager, an Office Manager and an Accounts team. There are always plenty of people who can answer your questions when they are not of a legal nature – please just ask.

We refer to the concept of *Time Units* in our Terms & Conditions of Business and how these are charged to you in your bill. Like previously stated, the thing you are paying for is the time and expertise of your lawyer. In order to record that time we use a computerised case management system which collects up all the time recorded by your lawyer against your case. This then translates in to fees.

A *Time Unit* is a six-minute segment that usually covers the time taken to deal with:

- Short letters and emails
- Short phone calls (not exceeding six minutes in duration)

All other work, for example the preparation and perusal of documents and meetings with you and with third parties, is recorded in six-minute *Time Units*, rounded up and charged at the relevant hourly rate. Ten *Time Units* make up one hour to be charged.

For example:

Say your lawyers hourly rate is £250 an hour (plus VAT = £300).

One telephone call (six minutes long) would cost £25 (plus VAT = £30)

One short letter or email would cost £25 (plus VAT = £30)

A 30-minute meeting would cost £125 (plus VAT = £150)

A meeting that lasts 40 minutes would cost £187.50 (plus VAT = £225)

The best way to communicate with us is by email. This way we both have a record of any communications. Whilst we accept that sometimes a telephone call is absolutely necessary, a lawyers productivity can be seriously impeded by receiving phone calls from clients about minor matters and this can only serve to delay your transaction.

If the person dealing with your matter is engaged, leave a message with their secretary. Avoid calling into the office, without a prearranged appointment, unless it is an emergency.

Make Sure You Can Afford It

Before instructing a lawyer you must make sure you are aware of how much it is likely to cost and if you can afford it. We usually bill on a monthly basis (if we haven't agreed a fixed fee) or when your bill reaches the amount agreed with your lawyer in advance (usually £150-£250). That way you can see how much time is being spent as you go along and you can spread the cost.

If you cannot pay a bill within 14 days then we can stop acting for you until you can pay. This will cause delays and can also increase the cost of your matter.

Only contact your lawyer with essential information.

Save it up and report it all in one go.

Use email to communicate.

Don't call in without an appointment.

Pay your bills on time.

Be Honest

This seems like an obvious thing to say but withholding any information from your lawyer that is necessary to progress the case will only cause delays and could get you in to trouble with the court if there is one involved.

For example, when completing a Form E for financial disclosure in a divorce case, failure to disclose all of your earnings and assets will only serve to delay your case and cost you more money. You may even be ordered to pay the costs for the other side, as well as your own, if it is your fault that the hearing has to be adjourned or rescheduled.

CONTACT US

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