



**COLLEGE
OF LAW**

LEGAL JOB HUNT: TIPS FOR LAW STUDENTS

**Job Hunting, Resumes,
and Interviews**





Are you on the lookout for a rewarding legal role? With all the formalities and drawn-out processes, the journey can be overwhelming.

From writing a professional resume, to tailoring your cover letter, to nailing your interview. There are many stages to get right.

We get it. And we've got your back.

In this guide, we take you through everything you need to find (and land) a perfect fit. Expect plenty of insider secrets along the way!



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1. EXPLORE THE JOB MARKET - *STRATEGICALLY*

To find the right job for you, you first need to understand your options. Because when you know what opportunities are out there, you can focus your efforts in the right direction.

But where should you begin your search? Start by taking a look at the College's Jobs Board, browse online job search engines – or even explore the hidden job market.

Want to maximise your odds? Try all three.

The College of Law's Jobs Board

Our noticeboard provides more opportunities for law students than any other website in Australia. And with our deep connections throughout the legal industry, we actively source new employers – often hosting over 100 jobs at any one time.

We also provide a free service where you can post your resume on the noticeboard. Upload, relax and let employers search for you.

To get started, visit collaw.edu.au/jobs.

Online job boards

Simply search Google for 'graduate lawyer jobs' and you'll find a range of job databases. All-purpose job boards. Legal-specific job boards. Dedicated career pages for each firm. And government jobs sites and LinkedIn pages.

But keep in mind, the convenience of applying through these websites means you'll be competing with a large talent pool. So to gain an edge, make sure your resume and cover letter stand out from the crowd. (Refer to our tips in Section 2.)

And if your research is running dry, be creative. Expand your search criteria to broaden your potential legal pathways. You may want to consider other cities or types of organisations.

Job boards to explore

Social justice, community and volunteering websites:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Survive Law: survivelaw.com• Justice Connect: justiceconnect.org.au• Ethical Jobs: ethicaljobs.com.au
Legal websites:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Lawyers Weekly: lawyersweekly.com.au• Legal Careers: legalcareers.com.au
Legal recruiters	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Burgess Paluch Legal Recruitment: bplr.com.au• Elias Recruitment: eliasrecruitment.com• Gatehouse Legal: gatehouselegal.com.au
Government jobs – federal, state and local	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• ACT: apsjobs.gov.au• NSW: iworkfor.nsw.gov.au• VIC: careers.vic.gov.au• QLD: smartjobs.qld.gov.au• SA: iworkfor.sa.gov.au• WA: search.jobs.wa.gov.au

The hidden job market

How do you access a market that's hidden? By putting yourself out there and building a profile in the legal profession.

A favourable referral from an employer, peer or colleague will spare you the time and costs normally required in the traditional recruitment process.

Sometimes, positions can even be built around you if your profile and skillset resonate with an employer.

Want to land an unadvertised job? Here are some tips to build your connections and give yourself every opportunity.

- Have purposeful and planned discussions with your legal seniors to discuss your options
- Join and participate in your local law society or a special interest group
- Volunteer at your local, regional, interstate or overseas legal community centre
- Participate in mentor programs
- Sign up for networking events and connect with professionals on LinkedIn
- Explore interim roles outside of the law to develop transferable skills

TOP TIP: GET A HEAD START IN YOUR PLT

Your work experience as an undergraduate can count towards your PLT. Simply download our Work Experience Application for Approval Form and submit it to us as soon as your placement ends.

Looking for further resources?

- [How to position yourself to open doors](#) (on-demand video)
- [Looking beyond the clerkship process](#) (on-demand video)

2. PERFECT YOUR FIRST IMPRESSION

Once you've identified the roles that interest you, it's time to craft a compelling resume and cover letter to grab the employer's attention.

These documents are often the difference between you and other candidates. (And you want to be the proud owner of a winning one.)

We've collated our top resume and cover letter tips to help you stand out in this competitive field.

The art of the killer resume

A first-rate resume is your ticket to the next stage of your job search: the all-important interview. So invest the time to create one that's relevant, direct, concise – and reflects *you*.

Unsure of what you should cover? Follow these three tips and you can't go wrong.

> Include only the important details

It's easy to get carried away when filling out your resume. But this is not the place to recap your life story or showcase your creative writing.

Instead, keep things clear and concise. And stick to the must-know details. Also, don't forget to tailor your resume for each job you apply for.

Include these key points and you'll be off to a flying start:

- Contact details
- Career overview
- Legal career history
- Education and PLT
- Professional association memberships
- Volunteer experience
- Other work experience

> Draw out your skills

Highlight your work experience and transferable skills. The key is to highlight your worth with punch and authority.

If you claim you have 'well-developed writing skills', then prove it. When possible, support your statements with an example. Better yet, provide irrefutable numbers or statistics for example, money you saved, projects delivered ahead of time or under budget, to demonstrate your capabilities in real-world situations.

What if you don't have much professional experience?

You can still emphasise the skills and accomplishments you gained during your studies, internships or part-time jobs. These could include research, client management or public speaking – all desirable traits that employers will be seeking in a lawyer.

> Present it professionally

You've got all your information down. Now you need to make your resume shine with a visual design to match.

Spend time finessing the layout with an easy-to-read font, clear headings and ample white space. Most importantly, keep your resume to within two pages (unless the job ad specifies otherwise).

Craft a knockout cover letter

Your resume and cover letter go together as a complementary pair. So when it comes to your cover letter, resist the urge to rephrase what's in your resume.

Instead, include new information that will hook the recruiter or employer – and leave them curious for more. Here's how you can prepare a compelling cover letter.

> Master your introduction

Recruiters are busy people. So your opening paragraph will often make or break your entire application.

Use this valuable space to identify the job position and how you found it. Then dive into how you align with the employer's culture, values and needs.

To source this insider info, scour through the company's website, LinkedIn profile and online publications. Then use your findings to build a case for why you want to join their team.

> Tell your story

A standard cover letter has three to four paragraphs. This is your opportunity to demonstrate why you're the perfect fit for the advertised role.

How? By addressing the selection criteria in the job ad – and how your unique blend of skills and experience will benefit their firm.

Be specific, supporting each statement with evidence.

Also, many employers now use AI algorithms to shortlist candidates. If you fail to address their job description, you might be overlooked before a single human even reads your application.

> Wrap it up strongly

Finish your cover letter on a positive, enthusiastic note.

Reinforce how you can contribute to their firm and that you welcome the opportunity to meet for an interview.

Be sure to mention your resume or any supporting documents, like your academic transcript.

TOP TIP: CHECK IT ONCE, CHECK IT TWICE

Don't underestimate the power of a ~~through~~ thorough proofread. This is perhaps the most important tip you can take on board to perfect your resume and cover letter.

Any errors will catch the recruiter's eye – and not in a good way.

So get a friend or family member to fix any spelling and grammatical errors. A pair of fresh eyes will help spot any mistakes you may have overlooked.

Looking for further resources?

- [The art of a killer resume](#) (downloadable guide)
- [How to stand out in your job application](#) (on-demand video)
- [How to craft a knockout cover letter](#) (downloadable guide)



3. KEEP BUILDING YOUR EXPERIENCE

While you're job searching, make use of your free time by staying proactive. Remain on the lookout for opportunities to expand your experience and knowledge.

Why? Employers value self-starters who take initiative.

Not only will your enthusiasm give you an edge over other candidates, but it will also prepare you to transition from student to professional.

Take on unpaid work and activities

Unpaid work or internships can set you apart and become your key to entering the legal profession. You'll gain hands-on experience with real legal cases and expand your professional network.

You can also get active within your university's law student society.

Or you can join an association that hosts events simulating the legal world – with activities like mootings, debates and client interviews. By mingling with your peers, you'll gain more confidence and connections. You might even find a great mentor too.

Certify yourself and build your credentials

As every other candidate is also applying with law school credentials, you should expand your repertoire and bulk up your resume with valuable workplace skills.

You might like to join a webinar on communication or time-management – and upskill your capabilities in areas that are *very* relevant to the legal profession.

To stay informed with the latest legal insights, join The College of Law's free monthly career [webinar](#). We invite legal professionals to share advice – and law graduates to recap their first year in practice.

Stay on top of trends

The legal world is fast-paced. To become – and remain – an effective lawyer, you must have a firm grasp of the latest developments. And luckily, it's all readily available online.

Subscribe to law publications like [Survive Law](#), [Lawyers Weekly](#) or [LSJ](#), follow influential law firms on social media or simply tune in to podcasts that discuss the areas of law you're most interested in.

TOP TIP: PROMOTE YOUR PASSION AND INTEREST AREAS

After digesting the latest trends, you might like to take it one step further by writing a think piece on a topic that's important to you. And then publish it on your blog or LinkedIn.

Show your command of the subject, put your name out there and start to build your professional reputation.

4. GET CONNECTED ON LINKEDIN

Your professional profile may take time to get right. But it will be time well spent because your personal brand often makes all the difference in landing a job.

Use LinkedIn to connect with professional peers, promote your skills and find opportunities.

Your profile could be just the thing to get your application over the line. So invest the time to fine-tune your details and make yourself as presentable as possible.

Add a (professional) profile picture

You might already know that first impressions matter. But did you know that a warm, friendly, professional photo can get you 14 times more views, connections and messages?

So ask a friend with a camera to take a profile photo that reflects the professional you – a head and shoulders shot in business attire with a clutter-free background will go a long way.

And don't forget to smile!

Create a memorable headline

Your LinkedIn headline should convey your career aspirations. So use a straightforward and concise headline like "Aspiring family lawyer" or "XYZ University law student with a strong interest in family law."

Employers often search for these terms when looking for suitable candidates. This is your opportunity to set yourself apart from other law students.

Make the most of your About section

Use this space to share your story – and sell your worth. (But keep it pithy: a couple of paragraphs written in first person with dot points is the sweet spot.)

And remember, no one wants to employ a robot. So skip the cliches and buzzwords. Instead of talking about your personality traits, describe your work performance and ambitions.

Also, include the keywords you want to be searched for. As LinkedIn uses this information to help people find you.

Finally, always use first-person language when referring to yourself. It is more sincere and engaging.

Highlight your experience

Establish your credibility by outlining your work history. (These experiences don't need to be limited to the legal industry either.)

Summarise your role and responsibilities in the description section. This is an opportunity for you to highlight your transferrable skills, like working in teams or how you met important deadlines.

When listing your responsibilities or achievements, use bullet points for maximum readability and impact.

Increase your connections

More professional connections will increase the likelihood of your profile showing up in searches. But make sure to prioritise quality over quantity.

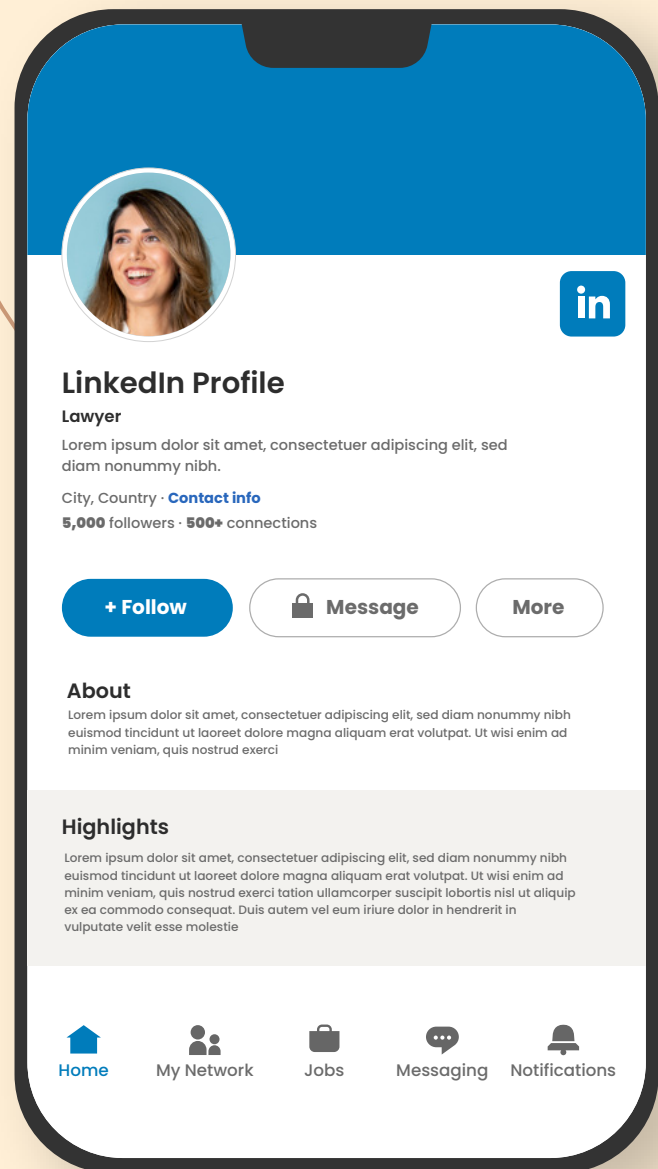
Follow relevant firms, organisations, groups and industry leaders. This conveys your passion for the profession and keeps you informed about industry trends – which will help you contribute more during interviews. You'll also be able to see jobs posted by people in your feed, which may not be advertised formally.

And be sure to connect with anyone you've met at networking events, career fairs or through mutual friends. They can become a valuable source of news and job opportunities.

Gain endorsements and recommendations

Endorsements from your peers or managers add credibility and strength to your profile – demonstrating that you are more than mere talk.

So reach out to peers, managers and mentors and ask them to help you out by writing a detailed and targeted recommendation of your capabilities.



TOP TIP: KEEP YOUR PROFILE CURRENT

Make sure your LinkedIn profile and resume align with each other. An inconsistent job history or skillset between the two will be a red flag to employers.

So if you update one, make sure you update the other.

Looking for further resources?

- [Getting LinkedIn to your dream career](#) (downloadable guide)
- [How to create an impressive LinkedIn profile](#) (on-demand video)



5. ACE YOUR INTERVIEW

Congrats! You've booked your first interview – and you're one step closer to landing a job. Now it's time to prepare for what's to come.

The good news is, if you've made it this far, the interviewer wants to learn more about you! So let your personality, professionalism and presence shine.

Before the interview

Want to start your interview feeling confident and assured? Research is key.

Get to know your prospective employer and understand the role you're applying for by:

- Studying the job description and key criteria
- Browsing through the company's website and LinkedIn profile

And remember, interviews are a two-way street.

So prepare a few questions to ask the interviewer. Tailor your questions to the role and what interests you about the firm.

During the interview

Interviews can be daunting to even the most seasoned professionals.

Thankfully, there are a few essential tips to help you put your best foot forward.

- Be punctual and presentable
- Get rid of distractions by silencing your phone
- Show enthusiasm through your body language
- Share your genuine interest in the role and organisation
- If you can't immediately answer a question, ask for a moment to pause and collect your thoughts

Ask questions and build rapport with the interviewer

After the interview

After your interview is done and dusted, now's the time to bring it home. How? By sending a follow-up email... 48 hours later.

This is your opportunity to reinforce your suitability for and interest in the role – and to set yourself apart from all those candidates who didn't do the same.

After that, be patient. The firm might be interviewing other candidates throughout the week. Harassing them with emails or calls will only set you back.

But if the interviewer has gone past the decision date, you can gently follow up again after 24-48 hours.

Meanwhile, keep looking for more jobs until you've officially signed a contract.

TOP TIP: PREPARE ANSWERS TO THESE COMMON INTERVIEW QUESTIONS:

- Can you tell me about yourself?
- What type of lawyer do you aspire to be?
- What accomplishments are you most proud of?
- What skills will you bring to our organisation?
- Can you describe a situation when you had to manage competing time pressures?
- What are your long-term career goals?

Looking for further resources?

→ [How to nail your interview and land your dream job](#) (downloadable guide)

→ [How to nail your job interview](#) (on-demand video)

6. REMAIN POSITIVE IN YOUR JOB SEARCH

The job application process won't always be smooth sailing. And you will likely receive knockbacks along the way.

A rejection email (or worse, no response at all) can be especially disheartening when you've put so much time, effort and emotional energy into a role. It's even more frustrating when you don't know why it didn't work out.

But remember, this is simply the reality of the job market – and nothing personal. So step back and realise that staying positive is key to your job search journey.

Stay focused and committed

We recommend practising Krumboltz's Happenstance Learning Theory (HLT) to help you stay on track. To remain upbeat and increase your odds for success, lean on these five attributes:

1. Curiosity: Learn something new regardless of where it leads.
2. Persistence: Keep trying, even in the face of rejection or silence.
3. Flexibility: Adapt yourself or your aims by finding a different path if things don't go according to plan.
4. Optimism: Believe that your goals are within reach and every experience is beneficial. There may even be better offers that you didn't dream of down the road.
5. Risk-taking: Stay proactive and pursue every chance that comes your way.

Your road ahead may have a few twists and turns

Many graduates we hear from took less traditional routes – yet still succeeded as lawyers.

One jumped in a car and visited every law firm within a 10km radius. Another revisited their professional contacts to earnestly ask for insights, ideas and perspectives.

So try different approaches and take time to build your capabilities. Stay motivated and widen your options.



**TOP TIP: REMEMBER ALL IT
TAKES IS ONE 'YES'**

While you might find yourself at some dead ends, it only takes one 'yes' to set you up for a long, successful legal career. Good luck and keep at it!

Looking for further resources?

→ [How to bounce forward after knockbacks](#) (on-demand video)

Want to learn more about Australia's most in-demand PLT program?

- W** collaw.edu.au/PLT
- E** enrolments@collaw.edu.au
- P** 1300 856 111 (Australia) or
+61 2 9965 7000 (International)