

Law Clerk interview questions

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What to expect

Law Clerk interviews mix practical questions about how you handle documents and deadlines with behavioural questions about accuracy and judgement, since the role sits close to solicitors and the consequences of an error (a missed filing date, a wrong citation) are real. Expect at least one question that tests basic legal research literacy even if you are not yet admitted.

- **Process:** Walks through how you handle a routine task like drafting a document or organising a case file, checking you understand the mechanics and quality checks involved.
- **Behavioural:** Past-experience questions about accuracy, deadline pressure or handling a difficult client, usually answered with a specific example.
- **Scenario:** A hypothetical problem (a looming court deadline, an unclear instruction) used to see how you'd judge and prioritise under pressure.
- **Technical/legal knowledge:** Checks familiarity with legal research tools, basic terminology and court procedure relevant to the firm's practice area.
- **Client-facing:** Explores how you communicate with clients or courts when you are the first point of contact but not the decision-maker.

Most Law Clerk interviews open with a quick rundown of your study or work background, move into two or three process or technical questions about research and document handling, then shift to one or two behavioural or scenario questions about pressure and judgement, before closing with questions about the firm's practice area and your availability.

1. Talk me through how you would research a point of law you're unfamiliar with, for example a limitation period issue.

Why they ask

Checks whether you have a logical research method and know the standard Australian tools, rather than just guessing at an answer.

How to structure your answer

Walk through it as a sequence: starting point (legislation or case law database), tools used, how you narrow results, and how you'd flag uncertainty to the supervising solicitor rather than presenting assumptions as fact.

Example answer

"I'd start with the relevant Act on AustLII or the jurisdiction's legislation website to check the limitation period itself, then move to Westlaw or LexisNexis to find recent case law interpreting how that period is calculated, particularly around discoverability or extension provisions. I'd note the citation for anything I rely on and flag in my summary to the solicitor which points are settled law and which are open to argument, so they're not relying on my interpretation as final."

2. Describe a time you caught an error in a document before it caused a problem.

Why they ask

Attention to detail is the core requirement of this role, and firms want evidence you catch mistakes rather than just avoid making them.

How to structure your answer

STAR: situation, task, action, result, with specifics on what the error was and how you noticed it.

Example answer

"While preparing a brief of evidence for a hearing, I noticed the date on an affidavit didn't match the date referenced in the covering letter. I checked back against the original signed copy and found the covering letter had the wrong date typed in. I corrected it and flagged the discrepancy to the solicitor before the bundle went out, which avoided a mismatch being raised by the other side at the hearing."

3. You're given a stack of correspondence to action and a court deadline hits the same afternoon. How do you decide what to do first?

Why they ask

Tests prioritisation judgement under real time pressure, which is a daily reality in case administration.

How to structure your answer

Judgement-under-pressure: state your priority call, the reasoning behind it, and what you'd communicate to your supervisor along the way.

Example answer

"The court deadline takes priority every time, since missing it has direct consequences for the client's matter. I'd set the correspondence aside, confirm exactly what's needed for the filing, and let the supervising solicitor know I'm focused on the deadline so they can flag if anything in the correspondence is urgent enough to interrupt that. Once the filing is lodged, I'd work through the correspondence in order of any stated urgency."

4. What experience do you have with legal case management software or document systems?

Why they ask

Practical fit question, since most firms run on a specific case management platform and want to know your learning curve will be short.

How to structure your answer

Direct walkthrough: name the systems you've used, what you did in them, and how you'd approach an unfamiliar platform.

Example answer

"I've used case management software to log matter notes, track court dates and store precedent documents, along with Adobe Acrobat for markup and e-filing. I haven't used every platform on the market, but the underlying logic of matter files, deadlines and document version control is consistent, so I'd expect to be productive within a couple of weeks of training on a new system."

5. A client calls upset about how long their matter is taking. What do you say, given you can't give legal advice?

Why they ask

Client-facing question that checks you understand the boundary between clerk and solicitor while still handling the person professionally.

How to structure your answer

Boundary-and-empathy structure: acknowledge the concern, state what you can and can't do, and describe the handoff.

Example answer

"I'd acknowledge their frustration and confirm I understand the delay is stressful for them. I'd explain I'm not able to advise on the substance of the matter, but I can check the file status and timeline with the solicitor and get back to them with a clear update by a set time, rather than leaving them without an answer. I'd then follow up promptly so the client isn't chasing us again."

6. How do you keep track of multiple matters with overlapping deadlines?

Why they ask

Process question aimed at your organisational system, since juggling several active files is the practical core of the job.

How to structure your answer

Walk through your actual system step by step: tools, checkpoints and how you catch conflicts early.

Example answer

"I keep a running diary in the case management system with every key date entered as soon as it's known, set reminders well ahead of the actual deadline rather than on the day, and do a weekly review of upcoming dates across all my files. If two deadlines land close together, I flag the clash to the solicitor early so we can plan the workload rather than discovering the conflict at the last minute."