Solicitor interview questions

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What to expect

Solicitor interviews mix technical legal knowledge with questions about client judgement and file management, since firms need to know you can both apply the law correctly and handle client relationships under deadline pressure. Expect the panel to probe specific matters you've worked on rather than accept general statements about your capability.

- **Behavioural:** Past examples of handling client relationships, workload pressure or difficult instructions, usually framed as 'tell me about a time'.
- **Technical/legal knowledge:** Questions testing your grasp of relevant legislation, case law or procedure in the firm's practice areas.
- **Scenario/judgement:** Hypothetical client or ethical situations testing how you'd exercise professional judgement under the Legal Profession Uniform Law or equivalent conduct rules.
- **Process:** Walk-throughs of how you manage a file end to end, such as a conveyancing matter from instruction to settlement.
- **Client-facing:** How you communicate complex or unwelcome legal advice to a client in plain language.

Most solicitor interviews open with questions about your admission, practising certificate and current areas of practice, move into technical and scenario questions specific to the firm's client base, and close with questions about workload management and availability, with time left for you to ask about supervision structure and files you'd be handling.

1. Walk me through how you'd manage a residential conveyancing file from instruction to settlement.

Why they ask

Conveyancing is a core task for this role and the panel wants to see you understand the full sequence, not just isolated steps.

How to structure your answer

Process walk-through: describe each stage in order (instruction, searches, contract review, exchange, pre-settlement checks, settlement) and note where things commonly go wrong.

> **Example answer**
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> *“After taking instructions I order the standard searches and review the contract of sale for any special conditions or encumbrances. I liaise with the client's bank and the other side's solicitor to confirm the settlement date, and in the final week I run pre-settlement searches to catch any last-minute title changes. On settlement day I confirm funds have moved through PEXA or in person before releasing keys, and I follow up with a settlement letter and file closure.”*

2. Tell me about a time you had to advise a client on options they didn't want to hear.

Why they ask

Solicitors often have to deliver advice clients dislike, and firms want evidence you can do this while keeping the relationship intact.

How to structure your answer

STAR: situation, task, action, result, focusing on how you framed the advice and the client's eventual response.

Example answer

“A client wanted to proceed with a property purchase despite a serious defect I'd flagged in the building report. My task was to make sure they understood the financial and legal risk before signing. I set out the risks in writing, walked them through the likely cost of remediation, and gave them time to weigh the options rather than pushing a decision. They ultimately renegotiated the price with the vendor, which reduced their exposure and kept the deal on track.”

3. A client instructs you to take an action you believe breaches your professional conduct obligations. What do you do?

Why they ask

Tests judgement against the Legal Profession Uniform Law and conduct rules, which is central to practising as a solicitor.

How to structure your answer

Judgement under pressure: state the immediate response, the rule or principle you'd apply, and how you'd resolve the conflict with the client.

Example answer

“I'd explain to the client clearly why the instruction conflicts with my professional obligations and what the consequences could be for both of us if I proceeded. If they insisted, I'd document the discussion in writing and consider whether I could continue acting at all. Where I was unsure, I'd raise it with a supervising partner or the Law Society's ethics line before taking any further step.”

4. How do you approach legal research when you're not immediately familiar with an area of law?

Why they ask

Legal research is a listed core task, and the firm wants to know your method, not just that you use Westlaw or LexisNexis.

How to structure your answer

Process walk-through: describe your starting point, how you narrow sources, and how you verify currency of the law.

Example answer

“I start with a secondary source like a practice guide or annotated legislation to get the shape of the area, then move to primary sources: the relevant Act and recent case law on Westlaw or LexisNexis. I check for any amendments or pending changes to the legislation, and I note any conflicting authority so I can raise it with a supervisor before finalising advice.”

5. Describe a time you had to manage several competing deadlines across different matters.

Why they ask

With reported average hours above 46 a week and multiple live files, workload management is a genuine concern for interviewers.

How to structure your answer

STAR: situation, task, action, result, with emphasis on prioritisation method rather than just working longer hours.

Example answer

“I once had a litigation deadline for court filing due the same week as two settlements. I listed every outstanding step for each matter, flagged the court deadline as fixed and non-negotiable, and delegated some of the settlement paperwork to a paralegal under my supervision. All three matters were completed on time, and I built a simple running checklist afterwards to avoid the same crunch in future.”

6. What would you do if you discovered an error in a document after it had already been sent to the other side?

Why they ask

Attention to detail and how you handle mistakes both matter given the consequences of drafting errors in contracts and court documents.

How to structure your answer

Scenario/judgement: outline immediate corrective action, disclosure obligations, and how you'd prevent recurrence.

Example answer

“I'd notify my supervising solicitor immediately and assess the materiality of the error. If it affected the client's position, I'd contact the other side promptly to correct the record in writing rather than waiting for it to surface. Afterwards I'd review my drafting checklist to work out where the error slipped through and adjust my review process for future documents.”