

Legal jargon explained

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If you need to use legal services you might come across words and phrases that you're not sure about. Your lawyer should explain them to you if you ask. Here is a summary of some words you might hear, and what they mean. If you can't find the term you're looking for, contact our Consumer Affairs [[contactus](#)] team to suggest that we add it to this glossary.

Agent

Someone who acts on behalf of someone else: For example, the SRA uses firms of solicitors to carry out interventions into legal practices on our behalf.

Agreement

Where two parties reach consensus on a set of facts or course of action: For example, the SRA sometimes enters into regulatory settlement agreements with individuals where particular misconduct is admitted and a sanction agreed.

Allegation

A claim made against someone which has not and may not be proved true

Alternative business structures (ABS)

Firms managed, owned or controlled by a mix of lawyers and non-lawyers offering legal services

Arbitration

A way of seeking to resolve a dispute without going to court: A third party (the arbitrator) looks at both sides of the dispute and makes a decision as to how it should be resolved; those involved may agree to be bound by the decision of the arbitrator.

Assets

Things owned by a person or organisation which usually have some value

Associate

A person, usually employed by a law firm, who may be in charge of handling your case: Often a lawyer, they are considered by the firm employing them to be a "senior assistant".

Bankrupt

The legal status of a person or organisation that is unable to repay debts owed to its creditors

Barrister

A lawyer regulated by the Bar Standards Board [<http://www.barstandardsboard.org.uk>], often specialising in court room

representation, drafting pleadings and expert legal opinions

Beneficiary

Someone who is entitled to a benefit (e.g. under a will or trust)

Bequest

A gift of money or personal property made in someone's will

Chambers

A collection of independent, self-employed barristers who share employed clerks to administer work, and who share the expense of such clerks, office buildings and brand name

Chattels

Personal belongings that can be moved from one place to another

Civil law

The area of law covering disputes you may have with a person or an organisation

Claimant

A person making a claim

Client

Someone who uses services provided by a lawyer or another

Compensation

Recompense for loss, injury, or suffering

Conditions

Requirements, restriction or permission added onto a document

Contract

An agreement signed by two or more parties setting out the terms of an arrangement—for example, between a buyer and a seller in a property transaction

Continuing professional development (CPD)

The training that lawyers (and other professionals) are required to complete every year by the organisation regulating them

Conveyancing

The processes involved in buying, selling or remortgaging a property to transfer its legal title from one person to another

Costs Lawyers

A lawyer who settles the legal costs of court cases, and who is regulated by the Association of Costs Lawyers [<http://www.alcd.org.uk/>]

Counsel

A term used to describe a barrister

Creditor

A person or organisation to whom money is owed

Crown Prosecution Service (CPS)

The CPS [<http://www.cps.gov.uk>] is the organisation that prosecutes criminal cases investigated by the police in England and Wales.

Crown Prosecutor

A lawyer (generally a solicitor or a barrister) working for the Crown Prosecution Service

Culpable

At fault or guilty of something

Damages

An award, typically of money, paid to a person or organisation for loss or injury

Discrimination

Being treated unfairly or differently because of factors such as disability, race, religion or belief, sex or sexuality

Disbursement

Fees that are paid to organisations as required as part of legal services: For example, this could be a payment made by your lawyer to a local authority for property information when buying a house.

Estate

A person's property, entitlements or obligations

Evidence

That which tends to prove or disprove something

Executor

Someone named in a will who will carry out the directions of the will

Exempt European lawyer (EEL)

A lawyer described by a European directive

Fee earners

Employees of firms who deliver legal services

Forfeited (to the Crown)

Where someone dies intestate, or their will is invalid, their estate might be passed on to the state if relatives cannot be traced: In the context of the SRA, if a solicitor is fined [[/consumers/solicitor-check/fines-and-rebukes](#)] as part of a regulatory agreement, this money is often passed on to the state.

Fraud

From the main menu, please select **Problems with a solicitor**, then, **Recognising fraud and dishonesty**

Fraudster

Someone who commits fraud

Grounds (legal)

The basis or foundation of an action

Hearing (legal)

A legal proceeding where the facts of a particular issue are looked at, and evidence is presented to help decide what the outcome should be

Incorporated company

A type of private company with shares, but the shares cannot be traded publicly on the stock exchange: the shareholders have limited liability, which means that only the money invested in the company can be lost in case of insolvency

Indemnity

Compensation for—or protection against—loss or damages that might be given by one person to another within a contract or otherwise

Independent person

Someone free from outside control or influence to act in the way they choose

Inheritance

Parts of someone's estate passing to someone on death

In-house lawyer

Lawyers working for organisations such as banks or local authorities to provide legal advice to the organisation

Insolvent

Being unable to pay debts when they are due or where liabilities exceed assets

Instructing

Authorising a lawyer to represent you: An instruction describes the type of work that you want them to do.

Integrity

Acting with honesty and morality

Interest (legal)

A right, claim or privilege

Interim proceedings

In law, interim proceedings are hearings that take place between the first hearing and the final hearing.

Intervention

When a regulator takes control of the papers and monies of a legal practice in order to protect the public

Intestate

Any person who dies without leaving a will is said to have died intestate

Law firm

Organisations that employ lawyers to provide legal advice and legal services.

Law Society of England and Wales

The Law Society [<https://www.lawsociety.org.uk>] is the organisation that represents solicitors and their interests in England and Wales.

Lawyer

Lawyer is a general term used to describe people who provide legal services. Unlike terms such as solicitor or barrister, lawyer has no defined meaning in UK law. Anyone can call themselves a lawyer, regardless of whether they have any professional legal qualifications or not.

In our Standards and Regulations [</solicitors/standards-regulations/>], we use the word lawyer as a shorthand to describe all regulated individuals, but in reality, if someone calls themselves a lawyer, it does not necessarily mean they have an official title or are subject to any formal regulation.

Legal aid

Government funding that can help people meet the costs of legal services they require, if they are eligible to receive it. It is also used to support legal assistance being provided at police stations where someone is arrested. The GOV.UK website [<http://www.gov.uk/legal-aid>] provides information on legal aid.

Legal disciplinary practice (LDP)

A type of law firm where solicitors work alongside other types of lawyer (such as licensed conveyancers) and a restricted number of non-lawyers

Legal executive

A lawyer regulated by CILEx Regulation [<http://www.cilexregulation.org.uk/>].

Legal Ombudsman

An independent body set up to deal with complaints of poor service

about all lawyers and law firms of England and Wales; see the Legal Ombudsman website [<http://www.legalombudsman.org.uk>] for more details

Legal services

Services provided to clients, such as legal advice or representation in court

Liable

When someone is legally responsible for something

Liability

Can mean something that is a hindrance or puts an individual or group at a disadvantage, or it can be something a person is responsible for

Licensed conveyancer

A lawyer specialising in property law and in some cases other areas of law, and regulated by the Council for Licensed Conveyancers [<http://www.conveyancer.org.uk>].

Limited liability partnership (LLP)

A business partnership in which some or all of the partners have limited liability in terms of their legal and financial obligations

Litigation

The contest process before a court

Manager (of a law firm)

The SRA Code of Conduct 2011 defines this as

- a member of an LLP;
- a director of a company;
- a partner in a partnership; or
- in relation to any other body, a member of its governing body.

Matter

An application, information or an issue that the SRA needs to consider

Misconduct

Sometimes used to refer to the act in which someone regulated by the SRA breaches a principle

Money laundering

The process of concealing the source of illegally obtained money

Multinational

A business that operates in different countries

Notary

A lawyer regulated by the Faculty Office of the Archbishop of Canterbury [<http://www.facultyoffice.org.uk>]

Obligation

A requirement to take a particular type of action, that may have a legal basis through a contract

Omission

A failure to perform a particular act where there was a duty or a legal requirement for that act to be carried out

Outcome(s)

At the SRA, this often means the final decision following an application to us or an investigation by us

Outcomes-focused regulation (OFR)

This is our approach to regulation. It allows firms to adopt their own approach, systems and management to best enable them to deliver a good service to client's needs and to support their business. We work in a constructive way with firms to help them comply with the SRA Code of Conduct and our rules. However, we take formal enforcement action if necessary.

Out-of-court settlement

An agreement between the two sides to settle the case privately before the court makes its decision

Paralegal

A broad term sometimes used to describe someone who supports lawyers in their work.

Partner

Members of a firm who equally share ownership and liability

Partnership

Two or more people working in business together

Patent attorney/agent

A lawyer regulated by the Intellectual Property Regulation Board [<http://www.ipreg.org.uk>].

Practising certificate (PC)

A document issued to solicitors by us which allows a solicitor to carry out certain legal work such as advocacy, litigation, probate and conveyancing. We can impose conditions on a practising certificate restricting the types of work that solicitors can do, and in what circumstances.

Probate

A legal permission provided by a Probate Registry for someone to

deal with someone else's estate after they die: A Probate Registry is an office where someone can be interviewed in order to be provided with a probate permission. To find your nearest Registry or for more information, visit GOV.UK [<http://www.gov.uk/wills-probate-inheritance/overview>].

Prima facie

A Latin term used to describe something that appears on the face of it to be true

Public interest

The overall welfare of the general public

Pursuant

When something is related to, or comes out of, something else: For example, our powers to regulate stem from ("are pursuant to") various acts of Parliament.

Recognised body/sole practice

According to the SRA Code of Conduct 2011, a recognised body is a body recognised by the SRA; a recognised sole practice is a solicitor or REL authorised by the SRA.

Registered European lawyer (REL)

A lawyer from a European state who registers with the SRA to practise law in England and Wales

Registered Foreign lawyer (RFL)

A lawyer from overseas who registers with the SRA to practice law in England and Wales

Regulated individual

An individual who is authorised by the SRA and is therefore regulated by us

Remunerate

To pay or reward someone for something they have done or a service they have provided, such as a company paying an employee

Revocation

When something is cancelled or taken away, such as the SRA revoking an individual's permission to practise as a solicitor

Risk

The likelihood that a particular choice or action might lead to a loss or damage

Roll of solicitors

A list of all admitted solicitors held by the Law Society of England and Wales

Scam

Any scheme that cheats people out of their property or money, or causes them damage for the benefit of others

Sole practitioner

A lawyer who runs his or her own law firm without other partners, directors or members

Solicitor

A lawyer who has been admitted as a solicitor by the SRA and whose name appears on the roll of solicitors

Striking-off/struck-off

An example is where a solicitor is struck from the roll of solicitors.

Third party

A term used to describe someone other than the two sides in a particular situation: For example, it can be used in motor insurance policies to describe other people besides the person who is insured and the company that insures them.

Trade mark attorney

A lawyer regulated by the Intellectual Property Regulation Board
[<http://www.ipreg.org.uk>]

Trainee solicitor

A person completing their training requirements in a law firm before applying to become a solicitor

Transparent

Being open and honest in a way that can be understood by others

Tribunal

At the SRA, this usually means the Solicitors Disciplinary Tribunal [<http://www.solicitortribunal.org.uk>], which is independent of the SRA. Any general reference to a tribunal means a person or group of people who collectively have authority to judge and/or determine claims or disputes.

Unadmitted

An individual who has not been admitted to the roll of solicitors

Will

A legal document that declares a person's wishes about the way their estate should be handled when they die