Billable Hours Chart and Time Increments Calculator for Attorneys

Written by Sharon Miki

Time is money—especially when it comes to how many billable hours in a year an attorney can accumulate. Thankfully, using a billable hours chart can help.

Lawyers work hard, and theywork a lot. Many firms expect attorneys to reachminimum billable hour requirementsranging between 1,700 and 2,300 hours per year. According to the latest *Legal Trends Report*, lawyers spend just 2.9 hours each workday on billable work. It's clear that lawyers must find ways to track their hours as effectively and accurately as possible to reach their targets—without losing valuable time on *the act* of tracking.

With this in mind, there are tools that lawyers can use to make it faster and easier to calculate and log their hours—like a billable hours chart. By billing in standard time increments, such as tenths of an hour, and using an attorney billable hours chart, you can spend less time trying to calculate your billable hours manually.

This blog post will explore how a billable hours chart can help lawyers better track time for invoicing. Also, we'll cover how other tools can make tracking attorney hours even easier and more accurate.

(If you'd like to skip ahead to a solution that helps keep your billables in law logged and on-track with minimal effort, see how it works in Clio Manage! Book a demo today.)

What is a billable hours chart?

A billable hours chart is an attorney billable hours template. It is a simple table to help you quickly calculate how many increments of an hour to charge, based on how long you worked. When tracking attorney billing increments manually with a billable hours chart, most lawyers adhere to 1/10th of an hour (aka six-minute) increments.

How do lawyers bill time?

Lawyers typically bill by the hour, but they track their time in smaller units—most commonly in six-minute increments (1/10th of an hour). Every task they perform for a client, no matter how minor, is logged and described—whether it's writing an email, drafting a document, or taking a phone call. These entries are compiled into a detailed invoice showing how much time was spent on each activity. The total time is multiplied by the lawyer's hourly rate to determine the final bill.

How to calculate billable hours: A sample chart with time increments

To quickly calculate what to charge for portions of an hour worked, use the chart below as a reference. The chart uses increments of **1/10th of an hour**. For example, if you worked for 15 minutes at a rate of **$100 per hour**, you could use the chart to see that the time increment is 0.3. So, 0.3 x $100 = $30 to bill.

	MINUTES
0.1	1-6 minutes
0.2	7-12 minutes
0.3	13-18 minutes
0.4	19-24 minutes
0.5	25-30 minutes
0.6	31-36 minutes
0.7	37-42 minutes
0.8	43-48 minutes

	MINUTES
0.9	49-54 minutes
1.0	55-60 minutes

You can also use a billable hours calculator to help expedite the process.

Why do lawyers bill 6-minute increments?

Billing in tenths of an hour (or six minutes at a time) is standard practice for practical reasons: Manually billing by the minute or in smaller increments is difficult and time-consuming to track and calculate by hand. Conversely, billing in larger increments could lead to excessive padding, leading to unhappy clients overpaying for legal services. Billing in tenths of an hour makes calculations easier with a billable hours chart and allows for reasonable increments without rounding up by too much.

Best practices for billable hours

Knowing and following reasonable standards for billable hours can help ensure that you and your firm can bill efficiently and effectively. A billable hours chart can help you accomplish this. At the same time, you can ensure your clients receive the best possible service and experience. The following law firm billing best practicesare essential:

1. **Be client-centered**. Torun a successful, client-centered law firm, you need to prioritize your client's experience. Have clear policies to explain rates and billing practices to clients from the start, such as how often you will bill them. Communicating clearly can help manage clients' expectations regarding billing and payment.
2. **Track time accurately**. Whatever method you use,track your billable time accurately—and in real time, if possible. If you track your hours as you go, you're less likely to lose out on hours that you forget about when tracking at the end of the day (or week, or even month).
3. **Avoid block billing.** While it might be faster to bill for blocks of time, list tasks separately for accuracy, accountability, and clarity to clients.
4. **Be detailed**. Use detailed but succinct descriptions to ensure clear, transparent billing. Descriptions should provide enough essential information for clients to understand what they're paying for.

5. **Don't pad hours**. You may be tempted to round up to an even hour when billing, but padding hours unnecessarily is inaccurate and unethical.

Do attorneys need a billable time chart?

While a billable hours chart can reduce the time manually doing the math when calculating billable hours, there's also a better, more accurate and efficient solution: Legal technology.

Managing billable hours with legal practice management software

Using a billable increment chart can save you time when calculating your billable hours. But legal practice management software does more. Legal practice management software saves you time, while also making tracking hours easier, more convenient, and more accurate. Using legal practice management software likeClio Manage makes managing billable hours easier in multiple ways:

- **Simplified time tracking.** Clio's legal time and expense tracking software lets you easily log work time directly from where you work. You can add time entries from your calendar events, tasks, communication logs and emails, and documents.
- **Automatic increment calculation**. Instead of manually calculating or using a chart to determine attorney billing increments, Clio lets you pre-set rates and automatically round time entries to the increment. This way, you are more accurate without spending time and energy manually calculating or referring to a billable hours chart.
- **Real-time recording**. Clio's software lets you set a running clock to record time while you work on a task.
- **Tracking on the go.** With the ability to capture time entries via Clio's mobile app, you can easily record your time while you're on the go or working remotely—so you don't miss out on forgotten hours.

In addition to making it easier for you to track and log hours, time tracking software like Clio Manage further improves your billing process by letting you create time entries for your bills with a single click.

Conclusion

Tracking hours for invoicing in the most efficient, accurate way is key to lawyer productivity and maximizing billable hours. Whether you use a billable hours chart to calculate time tracking faster or a tool like legal practice management software, you need to have a clear time tracking system and follow best practices. By tracking time more accurately, you can help yourself meet billable hours targets. You'll also ensure clients are invoiced correctly and clearly, contributing to an optimal client centered experience.

To keep your hours on-track with an easy-to-use legal practice management solution, book a demo with Clio today.

Note: The information in this article applies only to US practices. This post is provided for informational purposes only. It does not constitute legal, business, or accounting advice.

Frequently asked questions

What are billable hours for lawyers?

Billable hours for lawyers are the attorney work hours billed to clients for activities that are directly related to client matters. Attorney work not related to client matters, such as professional development, client development, and office management, is considered non-billable.

How do lawyers track billable hours?

Lawyers can track billable hours with a billable hours chart, which will save them the time, effort, and frustration of calculating the hours manually. Most lawyers bill in standard increments, with 1/10 of an hour (six minutes) as a common increment.

Do all lawyers use the billable hour system?

Not all lawyers use the billable hour system; some may opt for alternative billing methods such as flat fees, contingency fees, or retainer agreements. The choice often depends on the type of legal service provided and the client's preferences. However, billable hours remain a common practice in many law firms.

What is the impact of non-billable hours on a lawyer's workload?

Non-billable hours, which include administrative tasks, training, and firm meetings, can significantly impact a lawyer's workload. While these activities are essential for the smooth operation of a law firm, they do not directly generate revenue. Balancing billable and non-billable hours is key to maintaining productivity and profitability.

Do different types of law practices have varying billable hour expectations?

Yes, different types of law practices may have varying expectations for billable hours. For instance, large corporate firms might have higher billable hour requirements compared to smaller firms or public interest organizations. These expectations are often aligned with the firm's business model and client demands.

About Clio

Clio is the global leader in legal AI, powering legal work across the profession, from law firms of every size to corporate legal teams, government agencies, and courts. Its Intelligent Legal Work Platform unites the business and practice of law, connecting the people, information, and processes behind legal work. Clio's AI brings the context together with legal sources drawn from Clio Library, a growing collection of more than one billion legal documents. Over 400,000 legal professionals in more than 130 countries rely on Clio to run their legal world. Learn more at www.clio.com.