10 Paralegal Interview Questions You Need to Be Ready For

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Securing an interview for a paralegal job is an exciting and impressive feat. Now, it's time to prepare for that interview by studying the paralegal interview questions you'll likely get asked. Below we've outlined 10 common paralegal interview questions and thoughtful guidance and considerations for your answers. Continue reading for our best practices when it comes to fielding paralegal interview questions.

What are 3 skills that a paralegal should have?

A sought-after paralegal has an ability to multitask, a strong attention to detail, and a willingness to learn.

What to expect in a paralegal interview

As with any profession, interviews can be intimidating and uncomfortable. The good news is, this is everyone's experience. So, acknowledge it. And understand that your best chances at impressing come down to investing in your mindset and preparation.

When it comes to your mindset, work on building up genuine professional confidence. This way, when asked paralegal interview questions, you'll come across as a highly-capable professional, even though you might be nervously sweating underneath your blazer. One way to do this is to treat the interview as if you're deciding if *you* like *them*. Not only is this true (you should be thinking about this in any interview), this framing exercise can help ease nerves and support you in harnessing your inner confidence.

Not to mention, paralegals are in demand. In fact, the US bureau for labor statistics predicts employment of paralegals and legal assistants is projected to grow over 10% from 2020-2030. This should empower you to find the firm that's best for you and your goals. In addition, more and more firms are utilizing services provided by freelance paralegals.

Now, let's discuss everyone's favorite part—preparation. This is undoubtedly the most time-consuming, and potentially least-exciting, part of the interview process. Though, as a legal professional, we don't have to tell you how important it is to prepare. Set aside time in

your calendar to learn everything and anything you can about the firm you're interviewing at, the folks who work there, and the clients they serve. Your answers to the below paralegal interview questions should be tailored to suit the needs of the firm you're applying to work at.

10 of the most common paralegal interview questions

While the below list is comprehensive, it's not the only supportive resource to use when preparing for your interview. It is, however, a great place to start.

1. Why do you want to be a paralegal?

While this is a fairly straightforward interview question, your answer should be thoughtful and unique to your experiences. When it comes to paralegal interview questions like these (ones which aren't directly related to your hard skills), try turning your answer into a story. Psychologists found we retain information better when said information is delivered via a story, with a beginning, middle, and end. Share a personal story about why you pursued paralegal studies or a paralegal career. This will help you stand out from other candidates and hopefully make your interview memorable. Bonus: This strategy supports building rapport with the interviewer(s).

2. Why did you apply at this firm?

Equally as important as the above question, this is really your shot to wow your interviewer and separate yourself from the other candidates. Again, this is where you can add in personal stories, experiences, and share additional information that humanizes you. Talk about the clients the firm attracts and how you would enjoy working for them. Or, maybe this firm is family-owned and has values which align with yours. If you see yourself represented in senior roles at the firm, mention this. The art of selling yourself is easiest to do when speaking from strong passions and values.

3. What has your paralegal experience been so far?

This interview question is another opportunity for your potential future employer to learn more about who you are as an individual. In addition, this question gives you the chance to speak to your relevant professional experience, and how it applies to the role in question. To strike the perfect balance of discussing hard and soft skills, be sure to speak positively about any past organizations and coworkers, and any unique learning experiences you had. It's also imperative to speak in detail about the work you completed on a regular basis

at past firms. Keep it short, simple, and positive. Now is not the time to critique past employers. It is, however, the time to speak to how you've optimized or innovated processes at past jobs.

4. Are you planning to eventually apply for law school?

While this question could come off as ignorant or offensive (especially to those set on dedicating their lives to paralegal work), it's important to understand that many paralegals do pursue other careers in their lifetime. In fact, there are a myriad of career options for those with formal paralegal training. Wherever you fall on the spectrum of considering the idea of law school, it's important to signal to your employer that you'll be dedicated to your career (and potentially, their firm) in the foreseeable future. It's a good idea to speak to your motivations for wanting to work as a paralegal, and how their firm can help you gain the valuable experience you're after.

5. What areas of law are you interested in the most?

This is a more straightforward paralegal interview question. While we recommend you be honest, it won't serve you well to talk about your passion for criminal law in an interview for a role at an immigration firm. During your interview preparation, be sure to tailor your answers to the firm that's hiring. Be sure to study the job posting and description, review their firm structure (if they have roles and job titles listed on their website), and brainstorm the pain points their organization has. Can you solve any of them? For example, if they have lots of lawyers on staff but only one paralegal, it's a safe bet you'll be assisting with a lot of legal research. On the other hand, if the job description is all about bridging the gap between clients and lawyers, be sure to speak to your client communication skills in the interview.

6. What are your legal research skills?

For a paralegal interview question such as this one, it's crucial to be as specific and detailed as possible. Practice walking someone through the process you take when researching for a case. Mention any tools, databases, or softwares you use for legal research. If you're a new grad or have limited experience, try demoing some free legal research tools prior to your interview. Think about a time when you successfully uncovered information on a time crunch that helped the firm win a case or win over a client. Practice sharing this story in such a way that communicates your savvy research skills.

7. How do you maintain your attention to detail when completing repetitive tasks?

This is an important question to prepare yourself for, and rides a similar line as everyone's favorite interview question: "What's your biggest weakness?" No one wants to admit in a job interview they sometimes have problems staying focused, even though we all do. We're only human. That said, it's a smart move to start off by stating you naturally have a keen attention to detail and a workload of repetitive tasks doesn't inhibit this. You can also mention that you've heard in the past from legal mentors that modifying the order of tasks, setting specific deadlines, and reviewing your work after switching tasks for a period of time can all help with maintaining a sharp attention to detail.

8. How do you deal with frustrated or demanding clients?

Not every paralegal role will be a client-facing one, though many are. When it comes to answering paralegal interview questions about communicating with clients, be thoughtful and empathetic in your responses. It's important to relay the compassion you have for clients. Afterall, most are likely experiencing strong emotions when seeking legal help.

After you've presented an answer which speaks to the empathy you have for clients, while also boasting your strong communication skills, you can follow up and ask the interviewer about their best practices. Consider asking if the firm has any tools to support staff with client communication. These might include client portals or client intake software. Obviously you'll be able to gauge how open your interviewer is to these kinds of questions or conversations. But don't forget about our advice above: it's important for you to interview them as well. And if working with technology is important to you, it might not be a great fit to work at a firm reliant on their filing cabinet (opposed to a paperless law firm), or one tied to an on-premise server.

9. How do you stay up-to-date with legal and regulatory changes?

This is a fantastic opportunity for you to speak about how you prioritize networking, regularly check legal blogs for the latest news, and use Twitter professionally to keep your finger on the pulse. There are other acceptable answers to this question and you should be honest about what it is that keeps you well-informed and excited about working as a legal professional. We don't recommend boasting about reading the Harvard Law Review weekly if it's not something you actually do.

10. Do you have experience using firm management software?

The likelihood of this question coming up in an interview depends on the firm. While preparing for the interview, take a look at their website. If they use chatbots or have an impressive web presence, these are signs they leverage technology and could ask about your ability to do the same. Interestingly, there are job postings which list experience using legal management software as either an asset or requirement. Regardless, it doesn't hurt to have a thoughtful answer in your back pocket. If you've never used firm management software before, consider signing up for a free trial for firm management software and practice using it before your interview.

How to prepare for paralegal interview questions

Beyond studying the above questions and preparing your answers, other ways to set yourself up for interview success include:

- Asking others for feedback on your responses.
- Practicing an interview with a friend.
- Looking up general interview tips.
- The obvious one: Go through many different interviews.

Ultimately, you can practice in the mirror until you're blue in the face, but truly, the best way to confidently answer paralegal interview questions and improve your comfortability in interview settings, is to be interviewed. You will fumble, stutter, shake, and sweat, because we all do. Remember though, the interviewer is already interested in you. They wouldn't have brought you in otherwise. So, radiate confidence and curiosity as best as you can, set time aside to prepare, and go in understanding this is a two-way street. You're interviewing them to be your future employer. They should be trying to impress you too. Keep in mind, signing up to work at an organization with a poor working environment paves the way for paralegal burnout.

Final thoughts on paralegal interview questions

A paralegal interview is an exciting opportunity for everyone. Approach paralegal interview questions with the same preparation and professionalism you would with preparing for court or working with a client and you'll surely be successful.

Learn more about becoming a paralegal in a specific state in our resource hub.

Frequently asked questions

What questions to ask in a paralegal interview?

Common questions for paralegal interviews concern why the interviewee wants to be a paralegal, why they applied to that firm, and their paralegal experience. Other common questions relate to future plans, legal areas of interest, and ability to deal with clients.

How to answer 'why do you want to be a paralegal'?

When asked in a paralegal interview why you want to be a paralegal, the answer should be thoughtful and unique to your experiences. Turn your response into a personal story, with a clear beginning, middle, and end, to make yourself memorable.

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