

Top tips on commercial pupillage applications

Following our webinar on the pupillage application process, we have set out our top tips for applicants in preparation for the application process, at the application stage, and at interview.

BEFORE YOU APPLY

- 1. Familiarise yourself with the selection criteria on the website:** The selection criteria on the chambers' website tells you what the chambers is looking for. Ensure that you can demonstrate that you fulfil the criteria at both the application and the interview stage. Review the criteria in advance of the application process to give yourself plenty of time to fill the gaps. [More information on the Twenty Essex selection criteria.](#)
- 2. Gain experience of advocacy:** Advocacy is bread and butter for barristers. Trying it out before you apply is useful for two reasons: it looks good on your application form and, most importantly, it gives you an idea of whether you actually enjoy it. You can try mootings or debating through the Inns, at university, or at law school, or you can try out your skills on some real-life clients by volunteering at the Free Representation Unit.
- 3. Leverage your extra-curricular activities:** It is useful to think about the story your extra-curricular activities are telling the reviewer of your application. A pupillage application form is a piece of advocacy like any other. Some examples of extra-curricular activities that demonstrate an interest in law include essay competitions (e.g. through the Inns of Court) and pro bono work.
- 4. Consider doing a mini-pupillage:** Mini-pupillages will give you a good insight into what life at chambers is really like and the opportunity to meet the people that you might be working with during your pupillage year and beyond. [More information on mini-pupillage at Twenty Essex.](#)

DRAFTING YOUR APPLICATION

- 5. Demonstrate an interest in the chambers' practice areas:** Every set wants to know that you understand, and are enthusiastic about, its areas of practice. You can demonstrate your interest in a specific area of law by doing a course at university or law school, reading relevant cases, or even writing a blog or an article on a new development in the field. Examples of 'big' cases from the last few years, some of which barristers from Twenty Essex were involved in, include: the [Venezuela Gold](#) case; [Alize 1954 v Allianz](#); [FCA v Arch Insurance](#); [Halliburton v Chubb](#); [Enka v Chubb](#); [Sevilleja v Marex](#); [Micula v Romania](#); [Henderson v Dorset Healthcare](#).
- 6. Emphasise what distinguishes you from other applicants:** Draw on the work experience and extra-curricular activities that have equipped you with the tools to succeed as a barrister and emphasise any relevant skills such as foreign languages. You should also take the opportunity to note any extenuating circumstances that may apply.

- 7. Structure your answers:** Make it easy for the person reviewing your application form to select you. Give examples of how you meet each of chambers' selection criteria based on your life and interests, and structure your answers with headings.

THE WRITTEN PIECE OF WORK

- 8. Think through the problem:** You will be asked to write a short response to a legal problem. Spend time reading and re-reading the question, then systematically analyse each of the potential issues. The goal is to demonstrate your analytical skills rather than reciting the law.
- 9. Be clear and concise:** When writing out your advice, be organised and succinct. Set out a roadmap for the reader and use headings to structure your response. Cover all of the potential issues that you have considered and ensure that you reach a conclusion on each point. Try and take a definitive position.

THE INTERVIEW

- 10. Prepare yourself:** Look at the website to learn about the interview structure – for example, Twenty Essex only has one round of interviews. Read over your application form and written work, and consider the kinds of questions that you might be asked. You should have a broad strategy for how you might respond to each question, but avoid rote-learning (it is better to sound natural).
- 11. Try to relax:** Remember, no one wants to catch you out! Everyone in the room (or on the screens, if your interview is virtual) has been there themselves and can sympathise with how you might be feeling. With that in mind, stay calm: listen to the questions, allow yourself to pause and think through what you want to say, and don't be afraid to change your mind if you realise that you have made a mistake.

OUR TOP TIP

- 12. Consider getting a mentor:** Mentorship can be a useful way to get feedback and build confidence, particularly in the early stages of your career or if you are considering a career move. If you are eligible, consider signing up to the mentorship programme run by [Bridging the Bar](#), or look into the schemes run by the Inns (schemes are run by [Gray's Inn](#), [Inner Temple](#), [Middle Temple](#) and [Lincoln's Inn](#)), the [Bar Council](#), the Association of Women Barristers and the [Social Mobility Foundation](#).

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Visit our [pupillage page](#) for more information or email pupillage@twentyessex.com.