

## What should I be doing?

The key to success when applying to become a criminal barrister is having the right experience. Not only will this help you decide if being a criminal barrister is right for you, but it will also demonstrate your commitment to a career at the Criminal Bar and improve your chances of securing pupillage.

Experience comes in many forms and there is no right or wrong way to gain exposure to the reality of life at the Criminal Bar. However, in order to improve your chances of success you must think outside the box!

### Work Experience

Have you been a mini-pupil or made the most of our school engagement programme?

The best way to gain experience of the Criminal Bar is to undertake work experience with a barrister as a mini pupil. A mini pupillage usually lasts a week and involves you shadowing a member of chambers and going to court with them.

You can find out more from the CBA and the Bar Council websites. You can apply for mini pupillages directly through barrister's chambers who each have their own application procedure and process. Although most mini pupillages are unpaid, there are schemes, such as the Midland Circuit Mini-Pupillage Scholarship Programme (link below), to assist with the associated costs.

([www.dropbox.com/sh/2blbf14viexy4j2/AAAA4VLTi64Zwe0rWfF5TJAsa?dl=0](http://www.dropbox.com/sh/2blbf14viexy4j2/AAAA4VLTi64Zwe0rWfF5TJAsa?dl=0))



Many chambers now offer school engagement visits and will arrange for a criminal barrister to visit your school ; or arrange for you to visit chambers and gain work experience with a barrister for the day.

You may also find undertaking work experience in a solicitor's office rewarding and help you decide if the criminal bar is for you. This will help you understand the difference between being a criminal barrister and a criminal solicitor and decide which route is best for you.

Interview panels for scholarships and pupillages may ask "why do you want to be a barrister instead of a solicitor?" If you can answer this question with reference to particular work experience undertaken and what you learned about the equally important but differing roles of instructing solicitor and counsel, you will almost certainly impress.

Top Tip: If you go to an event and there is a barrister

attending you would like to shadow, approach them directly and ask if they can offer you a mini pupillage. The worst they can say is no! Usually they will guide you in the right direction.

### Volunteering

Volunteering is a fantastic way to gain experience of and exposure to the criminal justice system. Some organisations offer placements on a full-time basis for 3 or 6 months. This is a great way to totally immerse yourself in a project or programme. However, it is not the only way to gain this sort of experience for those who cannot afford to volunteer for free, full time.

Training to be an Appropriate Adult, sitting as a board member of your local Independent Monitoring Board or applying to become a Magistrate are all examples of flexible voluntary roles within the criminal justice system available across the country that can be arranged around work commitments.

For more information see:

[www.appropriateadult.org.uk/index.php/information/become-an-appropriate-adult](http://www.appropriateadult.org.uk/index.php/information/become-an-appropriate-adult)

[www.imb.org.uk/join-now/how-to-apply/](http://www.imb.org.uk/join-now/how-to-apply/)

[www.gov.uk/become-magistrate/apply-to-be-a-magistrate](http://www.gov.uk/become-magistrate/apply-to-be-a-magistrate)



**Top Tip:** The Kalisher Trust offers financial support to those wishing to undertake full time voluntary placements who would otherwise be unable to afford to do so.

[https://www.thekalishertrust.org/legal-internships](http://https://www.thekalishertrust.org/legal-internships)



## Paid Employment

Obtaining paid employment within a barrister's chambers or a solicitor's firm is another excellent way to obtain experience relevant to becoming a criminal barrister.

Paralegal and legal assistant roles are widely advertised and often specifically target law graduates and BPTC students who are yet to commence pupillage.

**Top Tip:** Try and keep your CV to two pages long.

## **What should I be doing and when?**

There's no time like the present!

Demonstrating your commitment to a career at the Criminal Bar and obtaining the necessary experience to help you succeed can begin at any stage, whether you're at school, university or in between.

## **How can I do it?**

There are lots of tools available to help you learn about and access the above opportunities.

Social Media is a free and easy way to keep up to date with current legal affairs and available opportunities at the Criminal Bar. There are many Twitter accounts that are a great source of knowledge (and inspiration) for anyone considering a career as a criminal barrister: the Secret Barrister (@BarristerSecret, CrimeGirl @CrimeGirl and Women in Criminal Law @WomenInCrimLaw) to name but a few.

In addition, there are a number of school and student engagement programmes available to aspiring barristers (at any level) who offer guidance and support, as well as the four Inns of Court, each of whom have a dedicated student support team (see below):

<https://www.youngcitizens.org/mock-trials>



<https://www.barcouncil.org.uk/careers/student-opportunities-and-events/barristers-in-schools/>



<https://www.innertemple.org.uk>

<https://www.middletemple.org.uk>

<https://www.lincolnsinn.org.uk>

<https://www.graystemple.org.uk>

**Top Tip:** The Bar Council and the Kalisher Trust run annual essay writing competitions. Consider submitting an entry one year. The author of the winning entry for both competitions will receive a generous cash prize.



## **Court Visits**

Did you know that the criminal courts are open to the public? You can sit in the public gallery and watch any hearing or trial (except in the Youth Court) as often as you like. If you have a free morning or afternoon why not pop down to your local court and see a criminal case for yourself.

**Top Tip:** The court publicly lists all the cases being heard in each courtroom that day. If there is a long list of cases in any given courtroom these will be short hearings dealing with case management or perhaps sentencing. If there are only one or two matters listed it is likely that courtroom will be hearing a trial. There is a lot of work that goes into getting a case trial ready and case management hearings are just as important as the trial itself.

