

Corporate Lawyer

Handle the deals, contracts and rules that companies run on. Long training, long hours, serious money.

TYPICAL PAY

\$159,670

a year, full time

PAY RANGE

\$78k to \$352k

starting to experienced

TIME TO QUALIFY

7 to 8 years

after high school

DEMAND

Moderate

job outlook

LICENCE NEEDED

Yes

regulated job

WHERE YOU WORK

Law firm offices, company legal departments, video calls, closing r...

How you get there

- 1 Bachelor's degree, any subject** 4 years
 There is no required pre-law major. Grades and writing ability matter far more than the field you pick.
- 2 The LSAT (Law School Admission Test)** Months of preparation
 The admission test accepted by every accredited law school. Your score and your grade point average decide which schools and which scholarships are open to you.
- 3 Law school** 3 years
 Three years for the juris doctor degree. The first year is core subjects, and the summer jobs you get in years one and two lead directly to your first offer.
- 4 The bar examination** 2 to 3 months of study
 Taken after graduation in the state where you want to practice, plus a separate ethics exam and a character and fitness background check.
- 5 Associate, then partner or in-house** 5 to 10 years
 Junior associates do research, due diligence and drafting. Partnership takes about a decade, and many people move to a company instead.

Pros and cons

- + Among the best paid careers in the country at the top end
- + The training and the license travel into business, government and policy
- + Deal work is intellectually hard and genuinely interesting
- Seven or eight years and often six figures of debt before you start
- Billable hour targets at large firms mean 60 hour weeks are routine
- Deals close on their own schedule and ruin plans without warning

Optional boosts

Mergers and acquisitions. Securities. Private equity and venture capital. Technology and data licensing.

Good to know

Your bar score can move states with you

The Uniform Bar Examination is used by more than 30 states plus the District of Columbia and several territories. A score earned in one of them can be transferred to another, which is why so many jurisdiction...

Corporate lawyers rarely see a courtroom

Transactional work is negotiation and drafting, not trials. Many excellent corporate lawyers have never argued a case in front of a judge and never will.

Where these numbers come from

My Next Move: Lawyers (23-1011.00)
 National Conference of Bar Examiners: the Uniform Bar Examination
 Law School Admission Council
 Harvard Law School

Numbers checked September 2026. Pay figures are typical full-time annual amounts in United States dollars, based on Bureau of Labor Statistics wage data and published pay scales. They vary by state, employer and experience. Tuition is for in-state students at public schools unless the card says otherwise. Sources, links and the click-through version: <https://career.help/us/careers/corporate-lawyer>



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