

Personal Injury Lawyer

You represent people hurt in crashes, falls and accidents, and you usually only get paid if they win.

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

**Plaintiff law firms, insurance
defense firms, solo practice, cour...**

How you get there

- 1 High school** Grades 11 and 12
 Anything that makes you read, write and argue. There is no pre-law subject requirement.
- 2 Bachelor's degree** 4 years
 Any major at all. Keep your grade point average high and sit the Law School Admission Test (LSAT), which is accepted by every law school approved by the American Bar Association.
- 3 Law school** 3 years
 Three years ending in a Juris Doctor (JD). First year is contracts, torts, civil procedure and criminal law. Torts is the subject this career is built on.
- 4 Bar exam and character review** Several months
 Pass your state's bar exam plus the Multistate Professional Responsibility Examination (MPRE), then clear a moral character investigation.
- 5 First years in practice** 2 to 5 years
 Handling claims, taking depositions, negotiating with insurance adjusters, and slowly getting your own files.

Pros and cons

- + You represent individuals against insurers, which is unusually clear work
- + Real trial and negotiation experience early, unlike corporate law
- + You can build your own firm without corporate connections
- Seven years and often six figures of student debt first
- Contingency income is uneven, and a bad year is genuinely bad
- Clients in pain call constantly, and some cases lose entirely

Optional boosts

Clinics and trial advocacy in law school. Starting on the insurance defense side. Medical knowledge. A second language.

Where these numbers come from

My Next Move: Lawyers (23-1011.00)
 National Conference of Bar Examiners
 Law School Admission Council
 The State Bar of California: admissions

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/personal-injury-lawyer>

Good to know

The bar exam is changing

The legacy Uniform Bar Examination runs through February 2028, and a new format is being phased in. Ten jurisdictions gave the first administration of the replacement exam.

There is no national law license

Passing one state's bar does not let you practice in another. Lawyers who work across state lines either sit multiple exams or transfer a Uniform Bar Examination score to a state that accepts it.



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