

Preparing for your First Meeting

Preparing for Your Meeting with the Attorney

Advance-meeting Checklist:

1. Ask the lawyer in advance how much time will be needed and set aside an appropriate amount of time in your schedule.
2. Familiarize yourself with all of the facts available to you relevant to your legal matter before the meeting. For instance, if you want your will drafted put together a general inventory of your assets and of specific items you wish to leave to your beneficiaries as well as a list of the full names and addresses of those beneficiaries. If you were involved in an accident, know the date, location and information about the other driver and make a list of your treating doctors.
3. Ask the lawyer in advance what documents you should bring with you and gather any other relevant documents that you think may be helpful.
4. Make sure you know where the lawyer's office is located and try to arrive a few minutes in advance of your scheduled appointment.
5. Find out in advance whether there will be a charge for the first meeting and be prepared to provide payment when you arrive.
6. Be perfectly candid during the meeting with your attorney about all aspects of your matter, and avoid withholding any information regardless of whether or not you believe it will help or hurt your matter.

Typically, there are a number of general questions that apply when seeking an attorney in almost any area of law. These questions include:

How long have you been practicing law?

How much experience do you have in handling the particular type of legal issue I have?

Have you been chosen to give lectures to other lawyers on this or related topics?

Are you a member of any specialty bar associations, committees or sections that are related to this type of legal matter?

Does the lawyer have a website or other information about his/her professional experiences and credentials?

Will you work on this matter by yourself, or will associate attorneys and paralegals also be involved?

If others will be involved, what will be the division of effort?

What are the possible outcomes of this type of matter?

What will you charge me to act as my lawyer?

What types of expenses other than fees will I have to pay?

Do you have malpractice insurance in case a mistake is made?

Have you ever been the subject of public disciplinary action?

Do you use email to communicate?

Are you licensed to practice law?