

Teaching Business English and ESP: Legal English

Overview of the Legal Profession

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Aim

To practise and expand vocabulary and phrases associated with describing the field of law.

Level

Upper-intermediate to advanced

Pre-lesson

This activity is appropriate for anyone in the legal profession who would like to practise describing basic roles and tasks in English.

Procedure

- Discuss with the students/participants if they typically deal with describing their legal services in English. They could be required to give presentations, to design promotional material, or to handle English speaking clientele. This will give you a preview of how well they can discuss legal services in English.
- Distribute worksheets. The students work in pairs or groups to complete the worksheet. Monitor as they work together. Provide any advanced learners dictionary such as *Macmillan English Dictionary* to help them.
- Check answers by each pair or group presenting an exercise section.
- In exercise 1 exploit the difference in meaning for each label. Check a dictionary under *lawyer* to guide the discussion.
Answers: lawyer (both)...counselor (AE)...advocate (BE: Scotland)...attorney (AE)
...solicitor (BE)...barrister (BE: England)...counsel (both)
- For exercise 2 ask each pair for 1 example task or case for the types of law practice.
Suggested combinations: corporate law...finance law (banking/securities)
... criminal law...labour law.....real law (real estate)..... contract law.... tax law
.....copyright law.... public law (government)
- In exercise 3-4 participants come up with example sentences of their own roles and duties. This can also be used for a mini-presentation to describe their appropriate title, field of law and example tasks.
Answer to exercise 3: firms.....clientele
draw up....deeds....wills
arbitrate...parties
file...to sue
on behalf of

Tips

- Look up a law firm's website on internet. (This can be from your own lawyer.) Take the promotional material and underline key words and phrases to describe basic legal services. On cards or on 1 sheet of paper, make a list of synonyms where students find the like words in the text. This can be done as jigsaw exercise or as a whole worksheet for homework.
- Refer to any basic legal coursebook or look up basic legal terms on-line to create more exercises (such as gap-fills or matching) for legal service description.

OVERVIEW OF THE LEGAL PROFESSION

Try this practice for basic description of roles and tasks within the legal field.

1 Label the following as British English (BE) or American English (AE). Some could be both British and American.

- | | | | |
|-------------|-------|--------------|-------|
| * lawyer | _____ | * counsellor | _____ |
| * advocate | _____ | * attorney | _____ |
| * solicitor | _____ | * barrister | _____ |
| * counsel | _____ | | |

2 Circle the words to combine with *law* to describe major areas of legal practice.

- | | | | | |
|------------|-------------|-------------|-----------|----------|
| company | relevant | state | corporate | market |
| target | cooperative | finance | criminal | |
| regulation | labour | common | real | contract |
| tax | copyright | development | public | |

3 Underline the appropriate words or phrases to finish these sentences.

- ▶ Law *forms/firms* offer complete legal services for domestic and international *clientele/customers*.
- ▶ Lawyers *draw up/decide* on documents such as contracts, *deeds/drafts* and *wills/warranties*.
- ▶ They typically *alternate/ arbitrate* problems and disputes between *players/parties*.
- ▶ Lawyers can *fold/file* a case of wrong-doing where someone wants *to sue/to sew* for a cash settlement.
- ▶ When a person doesn't want to talk directly to the other, attorneys often speak *in spite of/on behalf of* someone.

4 Using words and phrases from the above exercises, write 3-4 sentences about your roles and tasks within the legal field.

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