**What Are the Different Types of Lawyers?**

[By Beth Greenwood](http://www.ehow.com/contributor/beth_greenwood/)

Although all lawyers follow a similar educational path and must pass a state bar exam to become licensed, legal issues are extremely complex. Today’s lawyers typically specialize in a particular area of the law. Some lawyers spend little to no time in a courtroom, while others spend the bulk of their career in court. Lawyers can also practice a sub-specialty within a particular area.

**The Basics**

* All law students complete general education in the law. The first year of law school typically focuses on issues such as *common law, legal writing, legal analysis, research, client interviewing and counseling*. During the second and third year of law school, students may begin to choose courses that will help them in a specialty field. Some lawyers prefer to obtain a generalized education and develop specialty skills after graduation by choosing a law firm in their preferred specialty, finding a mentor with experience in their chosen area of practice or attending specialized training.

**Many Possibilities**

* The American Bar Association has specialty groups for 21 different types of law practice. These include related areas, such as *antitrust, business, labor and employment law*. Other lawyers work in the fields of *criminal law, such as criminal justice and general litigation*. *Family law, including divorce and child custody issues, and health law, including medical malpractice*, are two other major areas of the law. *Environmental law* includes not only that specialty but the related specialties of energy and resources. *Property, trust and estate law* is another specialty group. Some lawyers focus on broad topics, such as *public contract law, public utility, communications and transportation law, state and local government law, or international law.*

**Details, Details**

* Specialized areas of law require knowledge beyond that of the average lawyer. *Maritime or admiralty lawyers*, for example, must understand issues related to navigation, marine trade and other aspects of water-based transportation. *Civil rights* lawyers need specialized knowledge about discrimination and unfair practices in housing, employment and education. *Entertainment* *law* is a sub-specialty of intellectual property law focused on rights and royalties related to various types of media. The rapid expansion of social media has led to constant change in this field.

**Out of the Courtroom**

* Some lawyers use their legal skills and training to perform tasks that people might not consider the practice of law. Law schools employ lawyers to teach law students. Other lawyers become *mediators,* whose focus is on helping to resolve disputes between two parties. Mediators may also work with both parties in a lawsuit to find common ground, which can allow a resolution and settlement to avoid the time and cost of a trial. Lawyers might also give legal advice to help prevent legal action, such as drawing up a prenuptial agreement.

## Civil Rights

* Some *civil lawyers* handle civil rights cases. These are cases in which an individual -- or group, for class action lawsuits -- believes that her basic human rights have not been respected. Examples include seeking damages for unlawful police searches, or discrimination in housing, employment or education. People can feel that their right to privacy is violated during unwarranted searches or that they were denied opportunities to get a job, a residence, or go to a school because of certain characteristics.

## Business Law

* *Business law* is another civil area in which people often need a lawyer's guidance. If you are setting up a business, an attorney can help you determine which form to put it in -- such as an LLC or sole proprietorship -- as well as complete the necessary legal paperwork, which can be substantial and confusing. These attorneys can also help you dissolve a business or defend you against a lawsuit brought by another company.

## Personal Injury Law

* *Personal injury law is an enormous legal field encompassing many different types of harm.* Essentially, personal injury lawyers can assist you when you are harmed through the negligence, recklessness or carelessness of another party. Common practice areas include slip and falls, car and truck accidents, mass transportation accidents, medical malpractice and dog bites. These attorneys help you seek compensation for medical bills incurred, time lost at work, loss of consortium, pain and suffering, and punitive damages. The punishment sought for the wrongdoer is separate from that sought by criminal courts -- in fact, it is not uncommon for individuals to be prosecuted in both civil and criminal trials for the same offense.

## Other

* Other types of civil law do not involve wrongdoing at all, but instead relate to people seeking legal advice in complex areas. This can include *bankruptcy, tax law, family law, estate planning and certain types of immigration cases*. It's important to note that these legal areas can also spill over into criminal law, but it depends upon why the individual requires representation.