

I haven't got pupillage (again)... now what?

Klara Slater, a new tenant at 4PB, provides some tips for tackling the pupillage application process and making the most of your first six when you get there.

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You've received your rejection emails, congratulated anyone you know that has an offer (*genuinely* happy for them) and had some time to reflect...now what?

I've put together some tips that I feel helped me get through the process in a bid to try and help you get back on that horse:

Don't be put off by your rejection

Yes, I know much easier said than done. The majority of people I know at the Bar didn't get pupillage first time – some are at top sets after several attempts. Indeed Sam King QC, Head of Pupillage at 4PB, comments that *"there is usually a tissue paper's width between a successful and unsuccessful candidate [...] some of our very talented juniors tenants got in for a pupillage on a second or even third application"*. It's unfortunately part of the process, but the resilience and determination you are building now is only going to make you a better barrister in the long run!

Don't rush it

It may seem as though most people go to law school, become a paralegal and then a pupil, but there isn't a set path to coming to the Bar. Several barristers join after having had other careers. In fact, wider experience is often invaluable and usually sets you apart from other applicants, particularly at the Family and Criminal Bar. Using this time to research and apply for jobs you will enjoy in the interim is worth it in my opinion, whether they are strictly law-related or not. I worked at the Personal Support Unit (now Support Through Court), a charity that gives support to litigants in person, which was pivotal in my decision to apply to the Family Bar and will have undoubtedly strengthened my application.

Keep a log of 'hot topics'

I found it really helpful to keep a categorised log of cases/articles I read throughout the year. I suggest starting now. Playing the long game will make the application process less daunting as you will be already be familiar with topics that come up and will have some interesting answers at your fingertips. A few sources I recommend for family law, for example, are:

- <https://resolution.org.uk/podcast/>
- <http://www.pinktape.co.uk/>
- <https://professionallyembarrassing.podbean.com/>

Keep a log of any interviews

Whether mock or real, note down the questions you were asked and who asked them afterwards. This will be invaluable material for future practise.

Practice

In front of the mirror, to long suffering friends/family, through the schemes at the Inns – this may seem obvious, but is essential. You need to feel comfortable talking about yourself, the law and practise being caught off guard. It's also worth practising walking into the room confidently, finding a comfortable way to sit without playing with your hands/hair and making eye contact with interviewers as you give your answer.

Inn Mentoring Schemes

These are a great way to get some 1:1 advice, honesty and reassurance from someone who has been there.

I've got pupillage... now what?

Celebrate

...obviously! And have a good lie down. But as October draws closer you may want to take a look at the below:

The process itself is so stressful that it's easy to forget you may actually end up being a barrister by the end of it! Your pupillage will fly past and before you know it you'll be on your feet representing real people in real cases. I've put together a few pointers:

Go into chambers "IRL"

How much or little people go in will depend on your set in the post-Covid world, but regardless I would recommend going in as much as possible to maximise your chances of meeting people and learning by osmosis.

Don't be afraid to ask

This is *your* training. You are not expected to know everything. If you can't work out the answer ask your supervisor – this is what they are expecting.

Shadow junior members

Depending on how pupillage works at your set, your supervisors are likely to be senior members of chambers whose cases are very interesting, but not the kind you'll get in your second six. It's worth asking to see if you can shadow some junior members (if that hasn't already been arranged for you) to get a feel of the work that is coming your way.

Holiday

Pupillage is intense and your learning isn't going to be effective if you're exhausted all the time! Taking holiday is essential – don't be afraid to speak to your supervisor about it and makes sure it gets booked in your diary. I particularly recommend doing so between first and second six.

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