

## Advice for Mature Students: One Mature Student's Job Search Tips

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The following advice, kindly provided by a recently called “mature” student, offers tips to other mature students in finding and obtaining an excellent articling position.

### **I am going to touch on areas dealing with the interview process that others have called “things I wish someone had told me”.**

1. **Promote yourself:** You must help yourself in every way possible to secure an articling position. Promote yourself. The first impression you make on a firm is with your cover letter. Do not just throw something together and hope for the best. There are many resources available to you. Use them to present yourself in the best possible light. Never lie. You do not have to lead off with your warts but never lie.
2. **Cast your net very wide:** Apply to a wide range of firms in your areas of interest. Send out many applications. You will get an articling job. It may not be the articling job you originally had in mind but you will get a position.
3. **When you go for an interview, dress like a lawyer and behave like a lawyer:** Wear a suit. Wear comfortable shoes. Do not pick that time to break in a pair of killer shoes. Dress appropriately. Travel light, preferably without a coat. Pack a small emergency supply kit that may include band-aids, pantyhose, map, pencil or pen, breath mints, small bills, phone change and of course, chocolate or other snacks - all in a briefcase.
4. **The interview is not the time or place to play true confessions:** Do not confide your deepest fears and shortcomings to anyone involved in your interview process, and that includes students who show you around the firm. Your comments may be relayed back to the hiring committee. Ask intelligent questions but don't confess things like “It takes 2 stiff drinks to get me going in the morning.” Never admit you are tired, rather that you find the process exciting and exhilarating.
5. **Always ask the lawyers who interview you for business cards:** I know that all lawyers do not look the same but by the end of the day, a suit might look like just another suit. If you have the time between interviews, pencil in some details on the back of the card. You might even want to number the business cards. They are your diary of the day and will be very useful contacts.
6. **Never make your age an issue:** You will probably be asked what you did before law school. This is not necessarily a question that is put to “regular” law students. Turn the question into an opportunity to promote yourself. Whatever it was that you did before law school, emphasize the positive with the following words and phrases — experienced, good at time management, able to deal with real life problems, good at multi-tasking, team player, not afraid to show leadership, looking forward to learning new skills, take direction well, etc. Always be honest and back these traits up with examples.

7. **If you like a law firm, ask it out for a second date:** Firms like you to show an interest in them. Demonstrate that interest by asking to come back to meet more people. You might say, "I really enjoyed meeting *So and So* (the names are from the business cards you so cleverly collected) and would really like to meet others at your firm in the *Blank Department*". Firms like to be liked.
8. **Heed your parent and say thank you:** Say thank you at the end of your interview and firmly shake hands. If you can, call or email the lawyers you met during the interview process. Thank them for their time and tell them how much you enjoyed meeting with them. Tell them what a good impression their firm made on you.
9. **Abide by the recruitment procedures:** You do not need to discuss how you intend to rank a firm. You must decide for yourself. You should never lie but you may choose to not directly answer a question that makes you uncomfortable. For example, if during an interview Firm ABC presses you to tell them how you intend to rank them (by the way, this is not permitted under the procedures), you can answer that you are very impressed with their firm and know it would be a great place to work. Remember that the legal community is smaller than you think. I want to keep a good name in the profession and so do you.
10. **Be sensible and sensitive:** Do not feel that you must compare the number of interviews you were granted with others. During law school I chose to keep certain information private and refused to enter into the competitive game played by many. I never wanted to put anyone in an awkward position. Try to be sensitive to the feelings of others. Not everyone will be flooded with interviews. Remember that it is not a contest in which more, or bigger, is necessarily better. You need only one good offer.
11. **You will get a job:** Wasn't the hard part of law school getting in? You graduate if you attend class, do the readings, study and write the exams. Apply the same determination to getting interviews. Everyone I know from my year at my law school who wanted an articling job got an articling job. Some got articling jobs after the formal recruitment period. It is the one who got a job with an insurance company after the match who now has a great job in that field as a first year associate. It is the one who got a job with a sole practitioner who told me he will probably be made a partner at that firm right after articles if he chooses to stay. Whether it is on Bay Street or another street (and yes, there are other streets) you will get an articling job.
12. **Try to keep everything in perspective:** *Remember that life is good. Life may not be easy or fair, but rather, life is good. Acknowledge the good.* Each of you has already achieved a goal that many can only dream of. You were accepted into an excellent law school. You will graduate and you will become a lawyer. Treat the next stage of your career with determination. Life is good but it is not a passive ride where you can leave the driving up to someone else.