FOR LAWYERS

Before you hand in notice

From our article: **How to resign from a law firm: the order, the letter, the meeting**
Read it in full, with the sources for every figure: https://www.wilsonmannion.co.uk/insights/resigning-from-a-law-firm
Checked 22 October 2026. General information, not legal advice.

> **IN SHORT**
> Resign only once you hold a signed contract, and read your own contract first for notice, garden leave and restrictive covenants. Tell your supervising partner in person, then confirm in a short letter the same day. Take no client files, and agree with your firm what clients are told.

Key takeaways

- Resign only when you hold a signed contract with a start date and any checks are clear.
- Read your own contract before you speak to anyone. Notice, garden leave and restrictive covenants all sit there.
- Tell your supervising partner in person, then confirm in a short letter the same day.
- Take nothing that belongs to a client. Your duty of confidentiality does not end on your last day.
- Agree with your firm what clients are told, who tells them and when.

Before you hand in notice

- [ ] I have a signed contract with a start date, and the checks are clear.
- [ ] I have read my notice clause, garden leave clause and restrictive covenants.
- [ ] I have written down what, if anything, would change my mind.
- [ ] I have a handover list for every live matter, with diary dates and open undertakings.
- [ ] I know which documents are mine and which belong to clients, and I have asked if unsure.
- [ ] I know who I will tell first, and I will tell them in person.
- [ ] I have a short letter ready, with a copy for myself.
- [ ] I will ask for my last day, final pay and holiday in writing.

A resignation, in order

1. **Week before**
   Signed contract in hand, checks clear. Contract re-read. Handover list drafted. Quiet slot booked with your partner.
2. **Day 0, morning**
   The conversation. Say you are resigning and give your notice. Offer a handover. Decide nothing on a counter-offer in the room.
3. **Day 0, same day**
   Send the short letter. Ask for written confirmation of receipt and of your last working day.
4. **Day 1**
   Agree who tells colleagues and clients, and what is said. Answer any counter-offer in writing.
5. **Days 2 to 5**
   Hand over matter by matter. Update every file note. Ask about early release.

6 **Notice period**
Work it, or follow what is agreed. Leave client files, lists and precedents where they are.

7 **Last week**
Return equipment and passes. Check final pay and holiday in writing.

8 **Last day**
Leave on good terms. Tell the new firm if your date moved.

What if they say...

QUESTION	IF YES	IF NO
Do they offer more to stay?	Do not answer in the room. Ask for it in writing and for time. Your decision test is in the counter-offer guide.	Move to the handover plan and the last day.
Do they put you on garden leave?	GOV.UK says you get the same pay and contractual benefits. Check what your contract lets you do, and tell your new firm the date.	Agree your last working day in writing.
Do they offer early release?	Get the new last day, pay to that date and holiday in one email.	Work the notice in your contract.