FOR LAWYERS

Before you resign

From our article: **How long is a solicitor's notice period, and can it be shortened?**
Read it in full, with the sources for every figure: https://www.wilsonmannion.co.uk/insights/how-long-is-a-solicitors-notice-period
Checked 22 October 2026. General information, not legal advice.

IN SHORT

Your contract sets it. The legal minimum is only one week once you have been in the job a month, and solicitor contracts can run longer. Your employer can agree a shorter period, but it does not have to.

Key takeaways

- The legal minimum when you resign is one week, once you have been in the job a month. Your contract can ask for more.
- We found no reliable survey of notice by grade, so we do not quote typical lengths for associates or partners. Read your own contract.
- Your employer can agree to a shorter period. It does not have to. Get any agreement in writing.
- Garden leave and payment in lieu both end the working period, in different ways.
- Tell a new firm your real notice at offer stage, before you accept.

Before you resign

- [ ] I have read my contract and my written statement
- [ ] I know my notice period and whether it must be in writing
- [ ] I have checked for a garden leave clause
- [ ] I have checked for payment in lieu
- [ ] I have read any restrictive covenants and know what they cover
- [ ] I have a signed offer and the checks are clear
- [ ] I have a handover list ready
- [ ] I will ask for any change to my last day in writing

How to ask for an earlier last day

1. **Wait for a signed offer**
   Do not ask until your contract is signed and any checks are clear. See resigning from a law firm.
2. **Name the date**
   Say the last day you would like, and the date your new firm needs you.
3. **Offer a handover list**
   List every live file, the next step on each, the diary dates and who takes it over.
4. **Ask for it in writing**
   The agreed last day, pay to that date and any holiday arrangement, in one email.
5. **Tell your new firm**
   Give them the agreed date, in writing, once your employer has confirmed it.

A move, in order

1. **Interviews and a decision**
   The number of rounds, and the gaps between them, vary by firm.
2. **Offer and terms**
   Pay, working pattern and start date, agreed in writing.
3. **Signed contract and checks**
   Do not resign before both are done.
4. **Resignation**
   The conversation first, then a short letter.
5. **Notice**
   Worked, shortened by agreement, put on garden leave or paid in lieu.
6. **First day**
   The date the two firms and you have agreed.