



## How to Select an Oregon Personal Injury Attorney

In Oregon, lawyers are not certified as specialists by the organization that licenses lawyers. In medicine, doctors become specialists by taking detailed examinations by special boards that certify them as specialist in a particular field of medicine. In Oregon lawyers are not certified in particular specialties. That means any lawyer can say they handle personal injury or death claims.

While it is true that any lawyer in Oregon can handle those claims, it doesn't mean that they have special skills, experience, training, or resources to handle them proficiently. It is hard in today's complex world to be a general practitioner in the field of law. A lawyer that handles divorces, bankruptcies, wills, real estate contracts, criminal cases, and the occasional personal injury case usually will not have the expertise to handle your injury claim to its fullest potential. Ask intelligent questions before hiring a lawyer. The following are some good questions to ask:

**Questions 1:** Ask if the lawyer's practice almost exclusively injury, death, insurance law, defective product liability cases, and malpractice cases. Ask what percentage of the law firm's cases is of a type similar to your claim.

**Questions 2:** Ask what kinds of other cases the lawyer or the lawyer's law firm handles. If they also do bankruptcy, divorces, criminal cases, real estate contracts, wills and estates, it may mean they are "spread too thin" to have developed the special expertise necessary to do the best job on your insurance claim.

**Questions 3:** Ask if they actually try cases in court to juries. Are they trial attorneys or just settlement attorneys. Although skilled injury attorneys settle many of their cases without filing a lawsuit, insurance companies know if a lawyer never goes to court. Insurance companies will make lower settlement offers if they know your lawyer is not a trial lawyer and is not likely to file a lawsuit for you or take the case to trial if necessary to get fair compensation.

**Questions 4:** Ask if Martindale and Hubble has rated any of the attorneys in the firm. This rating company is one of the oldest and most prestigious attorney rating companies in America. It

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gathers information from other attorneys and judges in the geographic area where the lawyer practices. Attorneys are rated for their legal ability and their ethical standards. The highest rating is known as "AV." An "AV" rating indicates that other attorneys have highly ranked him or her for their professional excellence.

**Questions 5:** Ask the lawyer if they belong to the Oregon Trial Lawyers Association and the American Association for Justice. These two organizations provide important cutting-edge education on the topics of injury and death claims, insurance disputes, defective product claims, malpractice claims, nursing home claims, car accidents, truck accidents, and many more types of insurance claims. Typically, skilled and conscientious lawyers who handle these claims will belong to these organizations. Membership in these organizations, besides providing the lawyers with up-to-date training, also provides the attorneys with networking capabilities of conferring with other attorneys in Oregon or around the country who may be working on similar claims. Now that we have the power of the Internet, any law firm has access to the same resources as the largest firm in the largest city.

**Questions 6:** Ask the lawyer if they will handle your case on a percentage or contingency fee basis. That means no attorney fees will be charged until and unless you also get paid for your claim. Also ask if they will pay for out-of-pocket costs as the claim progresses. Find out if they will put this commitment in writing.

**Questions 7:** Ask if you can have a no-obligation, face-to-face meeting, or phone consultation, with the lawyer to see if you feel comfortable with the lawyer. It's important for you to feel confident that your best interests are a priority of the lawyer and the lawyer's staff. Ask if they routinely gather feedback from clients when they close a file and ask if they are willing to share some of those feedback questionnaires with you.

Finally and most importantly, you need to feel comfortable with the attorney you choose. You will be working with your attorney anywhere from three months to three years, depending on the case. You want to make sure you trust this attorney, and can talk with them, and that they have the experience you need for your specific case.

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