

Being charged with an offence can make everything feel urgent and confusing. The lawyer you choose may need to advise you about what to say, whether to apply for bail and what to expect at court. Asking clear questions at the first meeting can help you understand your options and decide whether the lawyer is a good fit.

This guide covers questions to ask a criminal lawyer, how to prepare for a criminal defence consultation in Brisbane, and some basics about Queensland court processes. It is general information, not legal advice about your particular case.

Start by checking the lawyer's experience

"Criminal law" covers a wide range of matters, from traffic charges and assaults to drug offences and serious indictable charges. A lawyer may handle some types of cases more often than others. Ask about experience that is relevant to the charge you face and the stage your case has reached.

Questions to ask about experience

- How often do you handle cases like mine?
- Have you appeared in the Brisbane Magistrates Court or the court where my matter is listed?
- Will you personally handle my case, or will another lawyer take over?
- Who will appear for me at court, and can I meet them beforehand?
- Have you dealt with urgent bail applications or similar hearings?

Listen for a clear explanation of the lawyer's role and experience, not a promise about the result. No lawyer can guarantee an acquittal, bail or a particular sentence. Your case will depend on its evidence, the law and the decisions made by the court.

Experience in a particular court can be useful, but it is not the only thing that matters. Look for someone who can explain the process in language you understand, identify what they still need to find out and answer reasonable questions about costs and next steps.

Quick checklist: Ask who will do the work, whether they handle your type of charge, and what experience they have with the relevant court process.

Use reviews carefully—and check official information

Google reviews can give you a sense of how other people experienced a law firm's communication, organisation and service. Read several reviews rather than relying on a single rating. Look for details about responsiveness and clear explanations, and remember that online reviews are personal accounts. They cannot tell you how the lawyer will handle your case or predict its outcome.

You can also check practical court information through the Queensland Courts website. It provides information about Queensland courts, locations and court processes. If you have a court date or are unsure which registry to contact, use official court information rather than relying only on a review, social media post or an old webpage. A lawyer can explain how the published information applies to your matter.

Be cautious if a lawyer or firm advertises a guaranteed result or pressures you to sign up immediately without explaining the work and fees. A first conversation should leave you better informed, not rushed into a decision you do not understand.



Quick checklist: Treat reviews as one source of information, confirm court details through Queensland Courts, and be wary of guarantees.

Make the most of your first consultation

A criminal defence consultation in Brisbane is a chance to explain what has happened, hear the lawyer's initial view and work out what needs to happen next. It is also your chance to decide whether you feel comfortable speaking openly with that person.

Before the meeting, gather any documents you have. These may include a notice to appear, bail paperwork, charge documents, police instructions, court notices, a summons, or messages about your next court date. Do not delay getting advice just because you do not have every document. If you are in custody or facing an urgent deadline, say so when you contact the lawyer.

Questions to ask about your case

- What do you understand the police are alleging?
- What information or documents do you need from me?
- What are the immediate deadlines or risks?
- What should I do—and avoid doing—before the next court date?
- Is there anything I should not discuss with other people or post online?
- How will we get and review the prosecution material, such as witness statements or recordings?

It is usually helpful to be honest with your lawyer, including about facts you think may be unhelpful. Your lawyer needs an accurate picture to advise you. Ask how they will communicate with you and how quickly you can expect a response, especially if you have court coming up.

A lawyer may not be able to give a final view at the first meeting. They may need to read the charge documents, obtain information from the prosecution or check a legal issue. Ask what they can advise now and what further work is needed before they can give a firmer assessment.

Quick checklist: Bring the paperwork you have, explain any urgent dates, ask what happens next, and be clear about how you want the lawyer to contact you.

Ask how fees and work will be handled

Before engaging a lawyer, ask for a clear explanation of fees and what is included. A low initial fee may not cover every court appearance or piece of preparation. Costs can vary depending on the charge, the amount of evidence and whether the case resolves early or proceeds to a hearing or trial.

Questions about costs and representation

- What will the initial advice or consultation cost?
- Can you provide a written costs agreement and explain what it covers?
- What extra costs might arise if the matter continues or becomes more complex?
- Are court appearances, counsel's fees, expert reports or other disbursements included?
- How and when will I be told if the likely cost changes?
- Can I ask about Legal Aid Queensland or another source of assistance?

A "disbursement" is an expense paid to someone else for your case, such as a fee for an expert report. Ask whether it is likely to be needed and whether you must approve it first. If you may qualify for help from Legal Aid Queensland, ask the lawyer what options are available and whether an application should be made promptly.

Quick checklist: Get the costs in writing, check what is excluded, and ask how you will be updated if the work or cost changes.

Understand the basic Queensland court process

The process depends on the charge and how the case is dealt with. Many criminal matters begin in a Magistrates Court. For a Brisbane matter, this may be the Brisbane Magistrates Court, but check your paperwork and the Queensland Courts website for the correct court, location and date. Some serious indictable matters may move through preliminary steps in a Magistrates Court before being dealt with in a higher court, such as the District Court or Supreme Court.

A first court date is often called a "mention". It is commonly used to confirm the charge, check whether the defendant has a lawyer and decide what needs to happen next. The case may be adjourned so the defence can review the prosecution material and obtain instructions. A mention is not necessarily a trial or the point when all the evidence is tested.

If a person pleads guilty, the court will usually move towards sentencing, either then or at a later date. If the person pleads not guilty, further steps may be needed before a hearing or trial. The exact route depends on the charge and the applicable procedure. Ask your lawyer to explain what is likely to happen in your case rather than assuming every matter follows the same timeline.

Stage What it may involve Question to ask your lawyer First mention Checking representation, charges and what preparation is needed What decisions, if any, need to be made on this date? Reviewing the case Considering prosecution material and taking your instructions What evidence have we received, and what is still missing? Plea or hearing preparation Preparing for sentencing, a hearing or further court steps What are my options, and what are the risks of each?

The Queensland Courts website is useful for official court information, but it does not replace advice on your charge, evidence or plea. If you have received paperwork, read it carefully and confirm the date and attendance requirements with your lawyer or the court registry.

Quick checklist: Confirm the court and date, ask what the first appearance is for, and do not assume that a mention is a trial. ...you get the idea.

If bail or another urgent application is involved

If you or someone close to you is in custody, or there is an urgent bail issue, tell the lawyer at the start of the call. Bail is a decision about whether a person can be released while their case is ongoing, and it can involve conditions. The law and process can depend on the charge and the person's circumstances.

Ask the lawyer:

- Can you advise or act urgently, and what information do you need today?
- Has bail already been considered by police or a court?
- What is the next available step to ask for bail to be considered?
- What conditions might be proposed, and can I realistically comply with them?
- What documents or details could support the application, such as an address or proposed support arrangements?
- What should family or supporters avoid doing while the application is being prepared?

Do not assume that having somewhere to live automatically means bail will be granted. The decision depends on the relevant law and the information put before the decision-maker. A lawyer can help identify what facts may matter, explain the process and prepare the application. Avoid contacting witnesses or discussing the allegations with them unless your lawyer has advised you it is appropriate.



If the issue is urgent, do not wait for a routine appointment slot. Explain the custody situation, any upcoming court date and any deadlines when you contact a lawyer. If you are contacting a firm outside business hours, ask whether an urgent response is available and what it will cost.

Quick checklist: State clearly if someone is in custody, give the next court date, and ask what information is needed for an urgent bail step.

How to decide whether the lawyer is the right fit

After the consultation, consider whether the lawyer listened, explained fantasticlawyers.com the immediate steps and answered your questions without making promises. You should understand who is responsible for your case, how to reach them and how fees will be managed. It is reasonable to compare lawyers, especially if the matter is not urgent. If it is urgent, tell each person you contact what the deadline is.

There is no single question that proves a lawyer is right for you. A good first meeting should, however, leave you with a clearer plan: what to do next, what information is missing, what the next court date involves and what the likely costs are.

Before you hire: final checklist

1. Confirm the lawyer has relevant experience with your type of charge and court process.
2. Ask who will handle the case and appear at court.
3. Understand the immediate steps, including any bail issue or deadline.
4. Get a written explanation of fees and what is included.
5. Check practical court details using the Queensland Courts website.
6. Use Google reviews as a guide to service, not as a guarantee of results.