



## ATTORNEY VS. LAWYER

*Did you know that there is a difference between an attorney and a lawyer?*

As a former history major in college who became an **attorney**, I am very interested in trivia, useless information and the origins of phrases and terms. One day a friend of mine asked me, “*so are you an attorney or a lawyer?*” I responded by saying that I am an **attorney** at law.

Even though the terms are used interchangeably today, there is a subtle difference. A **lawyer** is a person who has studied and is trained in law and may in some fashion provide legal guidance to others. So, if a person has graduated from law school they are technically a **lawyer**. By contrast, an **attorney** is someone who has passed a bar examination and has been admitted to the practice of law within a certain jurisdiction. To actually represent clients in the practice of law, one must be an **attorney**. So all **attorneys** are **lawyers**, but not all **lawyers** are **attorneys**.

To become an **attorney** you must “*pass the bar.*” Today, this refers to the infamous and dreaded bar exam. But a few hundred years ago in England, a person had to actually be an **attorney** before he or she could pass the bar. The “*bar*” literally referred to the wooden or brass bar or barrier in old English courtrooms. The barrier physically separated the often crowded public area in the back of the courtroom from the area in the front of the courtroom reserved for judges and those **attorneys** qualified to address the Court. The purpose of the bar was apparently to provide some protection and to control rowdiness from those in the public area. So, even though it sounds backwards today, at that time a person couldn’t pass the bar unless they were already an **attorney** or had legal business with the Court.

**DISCLAIMER:** The author has a history degree but is not a professional historian or history researcher. The information provided in this blog is not meant to be nor should it be construed to be legal advice, but rather general information on the subject matter. Statutes, case law and any other sources used to write this blog can be overruled, amended and changed over time. For any specific questions and/or legal advice contact a licensed attorney.

**Author: Nicholas Carda**