

## Do I Need a Lawyer?

With time passing and technology advancing, the duties of lawyers are ever changing. Specifically, some tasks lawyers normally perform, or tasks that people would normally go to lawyers for, can now be done by the average person at a less substantial price. This being said, what should or could people go to lawyers for, and what are these less expensive self-help alternatives that are now available for people to use?

A lawyer's typical duties include: advising and representing clients in courts, before government agencies, and in private legal matters;<sup>1</sup> communicating with clients, colleagues, judges, and others involved in a case;<sup>2</sup> conducting research and analysis of legal problems; interpreting laws, rulings, and regulations for individuals and businesses;<sup>3</sup> presenting facts in writing and verbally to clients or others, and arguing on behalf of clients;<sup>4</sup> and preparing and filing legal documents, such as lawsuits, appeals, wills, contracts, and deeds.<sup>5</sup> Pursuant to these duties, it may appear to one that they should seek a lawyer if they are either dealing with legal issues or needing a certain legal document drafted. One would be right to think like this, but with technology, specifically the internet, and other resources, a lawyer may not always be necessary.

In today's society, a person can go to Google, or YouTube, to find a multitude of sources and videos to help them complete a task that may have typically been done by a lawyer. Some examples of these tasks that can now be done more easily without a lawyer include forming a legal entity, drafting job descriptions, filing for patents and trademarks, and drafting collection letters.<sup>6</sup> There are even entire websites for drafting certain legal documents. One example is the website [LegalTemplates](https://www.legaltemplates.net/). Here, a person can find and draft legal documents for renting out property, managing rental properties, starting a business, creating business contracts, selling or transferring property, and many other specific situations.<sup>7</sup>

Not only are there resources on the internet for drafting legal documents, but there are other resources such as small-claims courts, dispute resolution centers, and even the Copyright Claims Board that are each created to help for smaller disputes. A small-claims court is "a streamlined forum in which people can air their dispute and have a judge decide it promptly."<sup>8</sup> In most states, people can represent themselves in small-claims courts if the total amount of the dispute is less than a certain dollar amount.<sup>9</sup> Resources such as dispute resolution centers, also known as neighborhood justice centers or citizens' dispute settlement programs, specialize in helping people who have common problems and disputes. These services are often available for a small

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<sup>1</sup> U.S. Bureau of Lab. Stats., *Occupational Outlook Handbook, Lawyers*, U.S. DEP'T OF LAB., <https://www.bls.gov/ooh/legal/lawyers.htm> (last visited Oct.15, 2022).

<sup>2</sup> *Id.*

<sup>3</sup> *Id.*

<sup>4</sup> *Id.*

<sup>5</sup> *Id.*

<sup>6</sup> See Stratton, *5 Legal Matters that Don't Require an Attorney*, NFIB, <https://www.nfib.com/content/resources/start-a-business/5-legal-matters-that-dont-require-an-attorney-63989/> (last visited Oct.15, 2022).

<sup>7</sup> *Build Your Legal Forms*, LEGAL TEMPLATES, <https://legaltemplates.net/> (last visited Oct. 15, 2022).

<sup>8</sup> *When Do I Need a Lawyer?*, AM. BAR ASS'N, [https://www.americanbar.org/groups/public\\_education/resources/public-information/when-do-i-need-a-lawyer-/](https://www.americanbar.org/groups/public_education/resources/public-information/when-do-i-need-a-lawyer-/) (last visited Oct. 15, 2022).

<sup>9</sup> *Id.*

fee, or even at no cost.<sup>10</sup> The Copyright Claims Board is an alternative forum to a federal court to resolve copyright disputes up to \$30,000 total. A lawyer is not necessary to file claims in this situation.<sup>11</sup> A lawyer can be called to help for all three of these resources, but they are not necessary all the time.

Although these resources are available and are inexpensive alternatives than consulting lawyers, there are always risks involved in using the internet and not seeking a professional. There are also situations where going to a lawyer is the best option. Some of these situations include being arrested for a crime;<sup>12</sup> being served with legal papers in a civil lawsuit; being involved in a serious accident causing personal injury or property damage;<sup>13</sup> a change in family status such as divorce, adoption, or death; and a change in financial status such as obtaining or losing valuable personal property or real estate.<sup>14</sup> In general, it may be best to seek a lawyer when there are major life events or changes.<sup>15</sup>

With the internet and other resources, lawyers may not be the first option for everyone; however, it is clear that lawyers will always be a needed profession in today's society. It will be curious to see how the duties of lawyers expand or shrink with the advancements of technology.

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<sup>10</sup> *Id.*

<sup>11</sup> *Copyright Claims Board, COPYRIGHT CLAIMS BD.*, <https://ccb.gov/> (last visited Oct. 15, 2022).

<sup>12</sup> *When Do I Need a Lawyer?*, *supra* note 8.

<sup>13</sup> *Id.*

<sup>14</sup> *Id.*

<sup>15</sup> *Id.*