

# The 4 steps to Choosing A Solicitor

(So you don't get "ripped off")



**Costs**

**Your big advantage**

**Save hundreds of pounds**

**How to avoid getting "ripped off"**

## THE 4 STEPS TO CHOOSING A CONVEYANCING SOLICITOR

*(So you don't get "ripped off")*

### THE PERFECT NIGHTMARE

Why is it so important to get the right conveyancing solicitor?

- Well, for a start if you're not careful you could end up paying two or three times as much in legal fees as you need to — for the same transaction!
- Or you could end up with a cheap quote, only to find hundreds of pounds of "hidden extras" added to your final bill.
- You could find yourself dealing with different call centre based paralegals every time you ring up.
- Your sale could fall through because of slow or incomplete legal work.
- If you're buying you risk missing out on the house of your dreams because someone else's solicitor got them to exchange first.
- Then there's the sheer frustration of poor, slow service. Of not being kept in the loop, not knowing why things are taking so long and having no idea whether you're ever going to complete.



### THE PERFECT TRANSACTION

On the other hand if you get things right you can have a dream transaction:

- You can save yourself hundreds of pounds.
- You can have the certainty and peace of mind of knowing exactly what you will pay.
- You can have a fast, efficient transaction where you feel in control.
- And you can even set things up so that if you can't complete you don't pay any legal fees!



It's important to instruct your solicitor as early as you can.

This will save you lots of time later on because you'll be on their books as a client ready for when you need them.

And if you're selling they can get your draft contract prepared and ready to go out as soon as you have a buyer.

## THE “HIGH STREET MONOPOLY”

In the old days, both buyers and sellers were victims of the old “high street monopoly”.

Those were the days when people had to choose from a small number of local firms — who all knew what each other were charging.

In other words there was little competition and it was easy to keep prices high.



## YOUR BIG ADVANTAGE ...

The internet has smashed the old high street monopoly!

Conveyancing work can now be done from anywhere in the country — you definitely don't need a local solicitor. This has broken the old “high street monopoly” and led to a huge drop in prices.



As a rule of thumb, to get a good solicitor you should expect to pay from around £400 if you're buying and £500 if you're selling — plus disbursements.

## BUT WATCH OUT FOR ...

One problem with the internet is the growth of cut price (and cut rate) online “law factories”.

- They sucker people in with cheap headline prices. Then the final bill comes in with a host of hidden extras that pushes up the real cost by hundreds of pounds.



- And you probably won't be able to pick up the phone to your solicitor. It's more likely that you'll be ringing a call centre, where a paralegal will be looking your details up on a computer.
- Perhaps worst of all, these “law factories” are often extremely busy (because they appear so cheap). This means a slow and frustrating service with the ever present risk of your transaction falling through as a result.



## SO WHAT'S THE SOLUTION?

How do you take advantage of cheap online prices without getting caught out by a "law factory"?

THE ANSWER IS TO FOLLOW THIS SIMPLE 4 STEP GUIDE:

# THE 4 STEPS TO CHOOSING A SOLICITOR

## 1) Find a "conveyancing specialist"

The ideal solicitor is one with an established reputation who specialises in (or has a department specialising in) conveyancing — not divorce or litigation, etc.

At the same time, they should be large enough that economies of scale allow them to keep their overheads low. They can then pass these savings on to you.

Avoid cut price "law factories" like the plague.

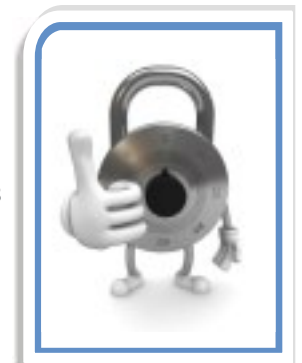


## 2) Get a "fixed fee" quote

Never ever hire a solicitor on a "per hour" basis.

This is how costs skyrocket and get out of control. You risk paying many hundreds of pounds more than you need to.

Instead, make sure that you get a "fixed fee" quote.



## 3) Get a "complete" quote

### *Disbursements*

The new favourite trick of dodgy conveyancing firms (both online and high street) is to provide low quotes to get your business and then add on lots of expensive hidden extras.

These hidden extras are known in the legal trade as "disbursements", which simply means expenses that the solicitors have incurred on your behalf.

Legitimate disbursements include things like:

- search costs
- telegraphic transfers
- land registry fees

Dodgy expenses designed to inflate your bill include things like:

- photocopy charges
- phone calls
- letters
- Filing your Stamp Duty Return

For a more complete guide to disbursements (and when they're ok and when you're getting "ripped off") have a look at Appendix 2.

## VAT

Another trick is not to include VAT in the quote. This makes it look much lower than it actually is and makes honest comparisons very difficult.

Make sure that your quote includes VAT, both on the legal fee and on the disbursements.

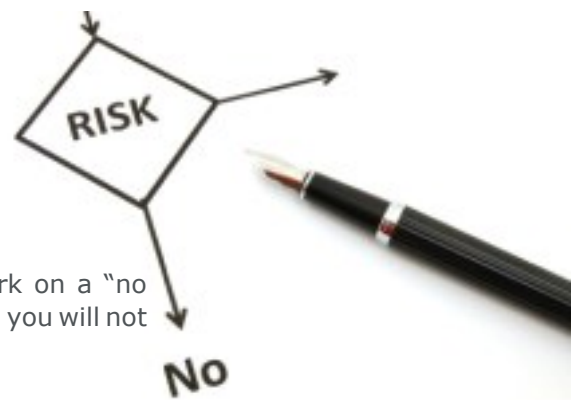


## 4) Get a "No completion - no fee" quote

Up to 1 in 3 property sales fall through.

Because of this, one of the biggest unexpected costs when buying or selling is additional legal fees.

This is something that can be avoided by finding a solicitor who will work on a "no completion — no fee" basis. This means that if your transaction falls through you will not have to pay legal fees.





Note that you will normally have to pay for expenses that have been incurred on your behalf — it's just the legal fee that is waived.





## WHAT TO DO NEXT?

Now that you know exactly what to look for you could start searching online for firms that match those criteria.

Trouble is, it's still going to be difficult to know which category a firm fits into:

- is it the bad category of cheap "law factory"? 
- or is it the good category of competitively priced "conveyancing specialist" 

To take away the stress of trying to work out what sort of firm you're dealing with we've put together a panel of solicitors who meet all of our recommended criteria:

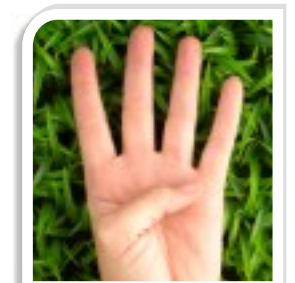
- they are "conveyancing specialists" 
- they provide "fixed fee" quotes 
- their quotes are "complete" with no hidden extras 
- they operate on a "no completion — no fee" basis 



## HOW TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THIS

If you'd like to take advantage of this and get FREE, instant quotes from our [recommended panel of solicitors](#) then here are the four simple steps to follow:

1. Click on the blue button below which takes you to our quote page.
2. Enter some simple details about your transaction (you don't even need to give your email!).
3. Click on the "calculate" button and you'll instantly get a set of complete quotes presented to you onscreen.
4. Choose the solicitor you want and click on the "instruct" button.



[Click here to get FREE instant quotes](#)

[CLICK HERE TO GET FREE INSTANT QUOTES](#)

## That's all there is to it!

And the great thing is, because you do the choosing your contact details only go to one solicitor. That way you don't have to worry about getting lots of emails from other solicitors wanting your business!

And as part of their service promise, whichever solicitor you choose guarantees to start work straight away if you need them to – if not, you've got them on call for when you do.

You will also be able to track your case online 24/7 as well as being able to pick up the phone to your solicitor during office hours.



## So Congratulations!

- you now have a recommended solicitor you can trust
- you've saved yourself hundreds of pounds
- you know your exact costs
- you have no legal fees unless you complete

[Click here to get FREE instant quotes](#)

[CLICK HERE TO GET FREE INSTANT QUOTES](#)

We hope you found this guide useful!

[Click here for more tips on buying, selling and moving.](#)

If you know anyone else who might like this guide please help us by sending them a copy or by emailing them this link:

<http://www.YouMove.co.uk/house-selling-tips/>

# Appendix 1

## *Extra Info about Conveyancing*

### TYPICAL COSTS

- buying: £450 - £1,000
- selling: £350 - £800
- leasehold transactions: add £50 - £250
- remortgage: £200 - £500
- expenses (often referred to as "disbursements"): £100 - £300

### BUYING

It costs more to buy than to sell, because there's more work involved — mainly in carrying out and reviewing the various searches that have to be done.

### SELLING

Selling will be cheaper than buying as the process takes less work. Don't forget that if you're buying and selling then you must factor in the cost of both.

### REMORTGAGE

A remortgage will usually be cheaper if you switch to another mortgage with the same lender.

Market competition is fierce so some lenders will pick up the legal fees (though make sure they're not making them up elsewhere).

### DISBURSEMENTS

See Appendix 2

### LEASEHOLD

Leasehold transactions involve extra work and so will cost about £50 - £250 more than freehold transactions.

### PAYMENT OF FEES

Don't sign a contract that allows the solicitor to take their fees from your completion monies — you should receive a separate bill.

This way, if you're not happy you can withhold payment until you are. (All of our [recommended solicitors](#) send separate bills.)

# Appendix 2

## *Disbursements*

As we explained above, some dodgy solicitors will try to tempt you in with low quotes only to add lots of expensive — and unexpected — disbursements to the final bill.

We've divided this appendix into two parts:

- Part I sets out the Legitimate Costs you should expect to pay when you are:
  - selling
  - buying
- Part II sets out fees that we consider to be “Hidden Extras” — the sort that dodgy solicitors use to pad out their bills.

Remember that if you get a conveyancing quote from our [panel of recommended solicitors](#) then all disbursement costs will be included in the quote.

(Please note that the costs set out below are approximate and are intended as a guide.)

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## PART I - LEGITIMATE COSTS

### **Costs when selling:**

#### **Fee for solicitor's legal work: £350 - £800**

If your property is leasehold you should expect to pay an extra £50 - £250 because of the additional work involved.

#### **Land Registry office copies: £4 - £8**

These confirm that you are the registered titleholder.

#### **Telegraphic transfer fee: £20 - £30**

Telegraphic transfer ensures the same day transfer of completion monies as cleared funds. Some solicitors will make a profit on this by charging more than the bank charges them: around £30 is what you should be paying.

## Costs when buying:

### Fee for solicitor's legal work: £450 - £1,000

If your property is leasehold you should expect to pay an extra £50 - £250 because of the additional work involved.

### Land Registry Office Copies: £4 - £8

These confirm that the seller is the registered titleholder. You may hear them referred to as "priority searches".

Your solicitor may have to order additional Office Copies immediately prior to completion. This is to protect you by making sure that the seller is still the registered titleholder when completion takes place.

### Telegraphic transfer fee: £20 - £30

This ensures the same day transfer of completion monies as cleared funds. Some solicitors will make a profit on this by charging more than the bank charges them: around £30 is what you should be paying.

### Bankruptcy search: £2 - £4

A bankruptcy search confirms to your lender that you haven't recently gone bankrupt.

### Local Authority searches: £100 - £200

The cost will vary depending on the authority.

A good conveyancing quote will ask for the postcode of the property you are buying and will be able to give you the exact cost.

### Drainage search: £40 - £60

A drainage search checks the property's water and sewerage connections. The cost varies depending on the local water company.

### Chancel Repair Liability search: £15

Dating back to medieval times, Chancel Repair Liability is a requirement to contribute to the upkeep of the local parish church.

About 40% of land in England and Wales is "Chancel land".

Some solicitors will try to get you to take out Chancel Repair Liability insurance (on which they make commission). In most cases it will not be worth you doing so, particularly since Chancel Repair Liability is being phased out from 2013.

## Environmental search: £40 - £60

An environmental search will check for contamination in and around the land that you are buying.

This can be particularly important if you are buying on land that was once used for industrial purposes. Apart from not wanting to live on contaminated land, you — as the owner — could be asked to clean it up at a cost of many thousands of pounds (even though you weren't the one who contaminated it!).

## Mining searches (coal, tin, limestone, china clay): around £60 for each applicable search.

Whether a mining search is required (and which one) will depend on where you live in the country.

## Land registry fee:

This is a sneaky extra tax on your property transaction.

Let's face it, it doesn't cost any more to register a property that's worth a million plus than it does to register one that's worth £50,000, but as you can see from the fee scale below that's not how you get treated:

Value of property £	Land Registry Fee £
0 - 50,000	50
50,001 - 80,000	80
80,001 - 100,000	130
100,001 - 200,000	200
200,001 - 500,000	280
500,001 - 1,000,000	550
1,000,001 and over	920

## Stamp Duty Land Tax (SDLT):

This is how much you will be taxed on your purchase and depends on the value of your property:

Purchase price	SDLT rate
Up to £125,000	Zero
Over £125,000 to £250,000*	1%
Over £250,000 to £500,000	3%
Over £500,000 to £1,000,000	4%
Over £1,000,000**	5%

\* The 2010 budget introduced SDLT relief on properties worth between £125,001 and £250,000 where the buyer or all the buyers (if more than one) are first time buyers. This relief applies to all purchases where the transaction date is on or after 25 March 2010 and before 25 March 2012.

\*\* From 6 April 2011 a new higher rate of SDLT (5%) will apply to properties worth more than £1,000,000. This change was introduced in the 2010 budget.

## PART II HIDDEN EXTRAS

### **“PI” or “Professional Indemnity” contribution: £30 - £50**

Having professional indemnity insurance in place is a Law Society requirement and as such is simply an expense of the business.

It is certainly not something that you should have to contribute towards.

### **Photocopying, phone calls and postage: £ variable**

These are all business overheads, which you should not be charged for.

### **Completing your Stamp Duty Return: £50**

A good solicitor will have factored in the cost of the Stamp Duty Return into their basic legal fee and not be adding it as a disbursement.

### **Dealing with your lender: £100 - £150**

Again, this should be factored into the solicitor's basic legal fee.

### **Leasehold property charge: £50 - £250**

The extra charge for dealing with leasehold property should be included in your initial quote.

You should be asked whether your property is freehold or leasehold when you are given a quote so this is something your solicitor ought to know from the outset.