

Legal Billing Advice

Great legal billing advice from [Sally Kane](#), an attorney and freelance writer specializing in legal, career and business topics published in [About.com:Legal Careers](#).

She states: "Tracking and billing time to clients is an important and inevitable part of working in a law firm. Partners, associates, paralegals, litigation support staff and other timekeepers bill their time in six, ten or fifteen minute increments, depending on firm policy and client directives. If you fail to bill your time, the firm cannot invoice the client and the firm does not get paid. Thus, timekeeping is a function vital to law firm success."

For anyone billing time, her advice summarized below will help you create accurate and precise time entries.

1- Craft Detailed Billing Descriptions

Detailed task descriptions are a fundamental component of a well-drafted invoice. It is important that the description of your efforts contain sufficient detail to allow the reviewer to gauge the nature and merit of the task.

2- Avoid Block Billing

Block billing is the practice of listing a group of tasks in a block summary under a single time entry. For example: "Draft interrogatory requests; telephone conference with Dr. Brown re: expert report; summarize deposition of Mr. Smith; review and revise correspondence to opposing counsel. 7.3 hours."

3- Record Time Promptly

Recording your time immediately after you complete a task is the best way to ensure accuracy. Attempting to reconstruct an days' (or week's or months') activities after-the-fact is difficult and encourages time "padding" (inflating actual time spent on a task to fill in gaps of unaccounted-for time).

4- Remember Your Audience

Like any document you prepare for another's review, it is important to keep your audience in mind when recording time entries.

5- Familiarize Yourself with Client Billing Policies

Every client has its own billing policies and procedures. These policies are often contained in the client's retention or engagement letter. These billing policies may set forth staffing limitations, budgetary guidelines, disbursement policies and specific timekeeping guidelines. By becoming cognizant of the ground rules at the outset, you can more responsibly account for your time and meet client expectations.

See her full article: [How To Effectively Bill Time](#)