

The Resume

Creating a professional resume is the first step in your successful search process. The resume is a marketing tool for convincing an employer to invite you to an interview. In drafting your resume, never lose sight that the employer's singular goal is to find someone who will be a positive, productive addition to their organization.

There is no universally accepted format for preparing a resume. However, keep in mind that employers receive a multitude of resumes and do not have time to scour yours for information. It is, therefore, essential to design your resume so that important information is prominently displayed and easily found.

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Writing Tips

Before sitting down to draft or revise your resume, take time to reflect on your target audience. Are you applying to a law firm, large government agency, small nonprofit organization, or judge? Familiarize yourself with both the organization and the position in which you are interested. Base your resume on the types of projects you will be involved in. Design your resume to cater specially to the needs of the employer by highlighting the skills that will interest them most. Thus, you will likely have more than one version of your resume.

You must determine:

1. Are writing and research skills most important or should communication skills and negotiation be highlighted?
2. Which prior job experiences best demonstrate the skills and attributes sought by the employer.

Most legal employers expect a one page resume. A two page resume may be appropriate if you have extensive professional experience prior to law school, other graduate degrees, or publications in other disciplines. Remember, employers screen each resume in a matter of seconds. Do not make them work too hard to find your information.

Printing your resume on good quality paper is best. Traditional stationery such as plain, linen weave, or laid paper of white, ivory or pale gray gives your resume a professional look. Avoid paper with speckles or flecks, and darker grays or tan colors. Employers often make copies of resumes for other colleagues to review; this style of stationery does not copy well. Use matching paper for your cover letters, thank you letters, and reference lists. While you can generally

purchase matching envelopes, consider sending your correspondence in a flat white or manilla envelope, thus preserving the original “unfolded” look of your documents.

Resume Content

A. Identification:

This section of your resume includes all information necessary for a prospective employer to contact you. Your name, address, phone number(s), email address and both current and permanent addresses should be included.

- Do not use nicknames. What you put on your resume is what you will be called. If your name is Benjamin Kevin Davis and you go by Kevin, write “B. Kevin Davis”.
- If you have a unisex or unfamiliar name, add “Mr.” or “Ms.” By doing so, you will be clearer and more considerate of employers who want to know the right way to address you.
- Employers are increasingly using email addresses to contact applicants. Be sure to use a professional sounding address, “ILuV2DriNk@ gmail” might give an employer a poor first impression.
- Be sure to keep this information clear and easily accessible!

B. Education:

This is one of the most important sections on your resume. It is best to list your educational history in reverse chronological order with your law school listed first. This section should only include your post high school education. You should include the name of your institution, location, degree(s) awarded, date of graduation, and college major(s) and minor(s).

- Under each educational institution, you may list honors and activities for that degree. Listing activities and honors related to school in the education section rather than at the bottom of the resume helps to put them in context.
- It is appropriate to write out Doctor of Jurisprudence, Master of Arts, Master of Science, Bachelor of Science, etc., or to abbreviate J.D., M.A., M.S., B.S., etc. Be sure to use a consistent format throughout the resume.
- Also, consider including grade point average (GPA), class rank, and other education related experiences.
- Including your grade point averages and class rank is recommended. If you do not include these indicators, the employers may assume that your grades are below the top half of the class. It is suggested that you include your class rank if it is above the 50% mark.
- Consider using action verbs, like those listed in Appendix A, to help enhance your descriptions and achievements.

C. **Experience:**

The experience section should display your work history. This category communicates a sense of your skills, responsibility, and leadership. You should include all professional work experience, including paid, volunteer, part-time and full time experiences that may have relevance to your prospective employer. You should certainly highlight any legal clinics, internships, and clerkships.

In reverse chronological order, list your relevant work experience. Be sure to include the employer, city of employment, your job title, date of employment and a brief description of your responsibilities.

Descriptions should give a condensed overview of what you did while employed. Your descriptions give the prospective employer an idea of your experience and previous responsibilities. Here is another chance to impress your interviewer, but be specific and truthful while giving your descriptions. Try using the active verbs from Appendix A to give your descriptions a more professional tone. Describe past experience using past tense verbs and current experience using present tense verbs.

It is not necessary to include your whole employment history. Instead, simply include those that strengthen your application for the position in question. Also, you do not need to provide a job description for each position you have listed, such as those for which the responsibilities can be clearly understood from the job title and have little bearing on the position you are seeking.

Sample Experience Descriptions:

Federal Government:

- Analyzed Environmental Agency Impact Statements. Prepared reports used for formulating interrogatories. Analyzed and developed areas for expert testimony. Conducted related legal research, including an investigation of agency grievance procedures.

Private Law Firm:

- Researched and drafted legal memoranda and briefs, with emphasis on contracts, torts, real estate and insurance law. Drafted pleadings and motions. Interviewed clients and handled inquiries.
- Prepared legal memoranda and researched substantive legal issues in international trade, trade regulation, patent, trademark, and copyright law. Drafted legal documents for use in litigation. Assisted in preparation for litigation before federal courts. Monitored congressional and federal agency actions affecting clients' interests.

D. Skills

If you have particular skills which enhance your abilities as a lawyer, reveal them. Such skills might include professional certifications or licenses or proficiency in a foreign language. If you can't decide whether a skill should be listed, ask yourself if it is job related; can this skill help you directly in being a lawyer? If so, include it!

E. Honors/Activities/Membership/Community Service/Volunteer Experience

(sample headings; list separately).

Listing membership in non-controversial organizations allows the employer to learn about your leadership and dedication beyond the workplace. The same holds true of listing volunteer experiences. It is especially helpful if you can refer to leadership positions you have held. Listing honors allows you to emphasize that your academic abilities have been noticed, and commended by others.

F. Interests

While certainly not necessary this section is an opportunity to share a more personal side with employers. Of course, DO NOT include personal data such as marital status, height, weight; and do not include a picture of yourself. Be selective and include only serious, ongoing hobbies, or specific talents. Interviewers may use this section as a good ice-breaker and a chance to learn about the nonacademic side of you. Caution: If you list too many, employers may conclude that your real passions (golfing, basketball, fishing, etc.) will interfere with your work. Something that may sound too boring (dominoes) or too risky (skydiving) could create a negative impression or cause the employer concern about health insurance premiums.

- * You may want to add other sections such as Military Service, Publications, etc., remember your resume is supposed to highlight YOU! Decide what presents you in the best light. Remember brevity and relevance are key. Try to keep it to one page.

E. Resume Mistakes to AVOID:

- * Remember to spell-check and then proof, proof, and proof again. Ask others to review your documents as well. This is a writing sample as much as a request for an interview. Employers prize well-written, error-free documents, and will expect them of a law student.
- * Do not use personal pronouns on your resume, i.e., "I", "me", "my".
- * Be complete and accurate with your education and work history. Everything contained in your resume must be up-to-date and accurate. Also, write out dates (e.g. June 2006).
- * Look up official names of scholarships, publications, and degrees.
- * Your resume must be easy to read. Arrange the information so that it flows. Allow enough "white space" so that it doesn't look cluttered and/or difficult to read.

- * DO NOT include false or inaccurate information on your resume!

What NOT to include:

- * An “objective” or “goal” statement is unnecessary for most law-related positions and may work against you because some employers use these statements to screen out applicants.
- * Do not include salary demands or salary history.
- * Do not include political affiliations, religious organizations, or controversial groups. You do not want the initial resume screened making the determination that you do not “fit”; the determination should be left to the interview. The exception to this is if you are applying to an organization that values or represents such a group. (a Republican senator, the National Organization for Women, etc.)
- * When providing a list of references, use a separate sheet (same paper as your resume) with the same contact information that is on the top of your resume. You will hand this sheet to employers when they ask for your references. There is no need to state, "References available upon request" on your resume. Employers know that.
- * Do not use binders, folders, or paper longer than 8 ½ " x 11".
- * DO NOT include employer street addresses and telephone numbers as part of job description.
- * DO NOT include marital status, age, height, weight, national origin, ethnicity, race, health, or any other data that is unlawful to use in hiring practices.



Appendix A “Action Verbs”

Problem Solving:

converted
detected
developed
edited
enhanced
identified
implemented
improved
incorporated
increased
initiated
instituted
orchestrated
overhauled
reduced
reorganized
repaired
replaced
resolved
restored
saved
secured
solved
standardized
streamlined
strengthened
upgraded

Legal analysis and reasoning:

analyzed
assessed
compared
critiqued
evaluated
examined
explored
formulated
inspected
interpreted
outlined
screened
synthesized
tested

Legal Research and Factual Investigation:

assembled
audited
collected
compiled
documented
extracted
gathered
identified
interviewed
investigated
located
observed
organized
recorded
reported
researched
reviewed
summarized
surveyed

Communication:

articulated
authored
collaborated
communicated
directed
drafted
edited
expressed
facilitated
informed
interacted
participated
persuaded
presented
publicized
published
spoke
translated
wrote
aided

Counseling:

advised
assisted
coached
conferred
consulted
counseled
explained
guided
instructed
taught
trained

Negotiation:

advocated
ameliorated
arbitrated
convinced
debated
discussed
elicited
influenced
mediated
mitigated
moderated
motivated
negotiated
reconciled
represented
solicited
supported

Litigation and Alternative Dispute Resolution:

advised
collaborated
considered
generated
interacted
litigated
proposed
provided
recommended
reconciled

***Organizing and
Managing Legal Work:***

arranged
balanced
billed
budgeted
catalogued
categorized
delegated
filed
hired
managed
organized
oversaw
planned
prioritized
reviewed
scheduled
standardized
supervised
systematized

***Recognizing and
Resolving Ethical
Dilemmas:***

achieved
considered
enforced
exceeded
executed
helped
led
pioneered
succeeded
volunteered

***More accomplishment
verbs:***

applied
chaired
completed
contacted
contracted
created
designed