

THE LEGAL RESUME

Purpose of a Resume

Your resume is your personal marketing tool. It should:

- Summarize your education and experience
- Introduce you to potential employers and focus their attention on pertinent areas of your background
- Get you through the door to an interview
- Show prospective employers how your background makes you valuable to them
- Serve as an example of your work product

Your resume tells employers what a great job you can do for them. Update it as you gain experience and participate in new activities.

The same resume may not be appropriate for all employers. As you target different employers, make changes to emphasize the information that will be of greatest interest to your audience. Your resume for a conservative law firm might look different than the resume for a public interest position.

Format and Stylistic Details

You want the employer to focus on the substance of your resume, not its form. Be sure that:

- The format is not distracting
- The document has a professional appearance

Most lawyers are conservative in their approach to protocol. Do not use colored paper or an unusual font or format

Most employers will spend about 30 seconds reviewing a resume. A concise, easy-to-read resume with a professional appearance stands a better chance of receiving a second look. Keep these guidelines in mind:

- When choosing a format, find one that appeals to you and best highlights your background.
- Choose one that effectively uses white space, headings, spacing, and indentation.
- Avoid the urge to use an unusual format to stand out from the crowd.
- Avoid a cluttered appearance.
- Pertinent information should jump out at the reader.
- Use an outline format, rather than narrative.
- Use letter-size white, cream, or gray paper of high quality.
- Unless law is your second career and you have a great deal of relevant experience, limit your resume to a single page.
- Use black ink and a conservative font between 10 and 14 points in size.
- Use 1-inch margins on all four sides of your resume; to keep it to a single page, you may use slightly smaller margins.

Preparing Your Resume

Before starting to write:

- List all information that might be included:
 - Your law school, graduate, and undergraduate education, work experience (both paid and volunteer)
 - School and community activities
 - Honors and awards
 - Outside interests
 - Professional affiliations
 - Military experience
 - Publications
 - Special skills
 - Language proficiencies.
- Consider the personal attributes a legal employer is likely to be seeking:
 - Organization
 - Excellent analytical and writing skills
 - Persuasiveness
 - Commitment
 - Energy
 - Attention to detail
 - Thoroughness
 - People skills
- Consider which of these qualities you possess, and how they are reflected in your life experiences.
- Evaluate the transferable skills that you gained through past educational or work experiences.

Sections

Every resume will include a heading and sections for education and experience. Other sections are optional and will depend on your unique background.

Heading

- Your full name, address, and phone number should appear at the top of your resume.
- The word “Resume” should not.
- If your permanent address is outside Spokane and you are seeking employment in that area, include your permanent address.

Education

- With rare exceptions, this will be the first major section of your resume.
- List schools in reverse chronological order: law school first, then other graduate programs, then undergraduate.
- Include the name of the school, city and state, and degree attained. Do not include high school.

Law School

- Indicate the month and year you expect to graduate. For example, “J.D. expected May 20__.”
- We encourage employers to use many indicators of competence, many employers place great reliance on grades.
 - If you are in the top third of your class, you should include this on your resume.
Sample formats include:
 - GPA 3.6
 - Top 15% of class
 - Class Rank 30/160
 - Top third of class

- If you are a 1L student and received a CALI in Legal Research and Writing, include it.
- If your overall GPA is not as high as you'd like, you may choose to highlight an upward trend in grades by indicating your GPAs for various years. You can also indicate those classes in which you excelled, as long as they are relevant to the employer.
Do not include your LSAT score.
- Include any activities/honors related to law school (see below).

Undergraduate or Graduate Schools

- Indicate the degree and month and year received.
- Include your GPA if above 3.0 and any honors received with your degrees (i.e., cum laude).
- If you are cum laude and list it, you do not have to list your GPA; it is redundant.
- Include any relevant activities or honors related to each school.

Honors and Activities

- List honors and activities under the school they relate to.
 - If you have a substantial number of honors and activities from non-educational areas and/or many major honors, you may choose to create a separate section titled "Honors and Activities."
 - List the name of the honor and activity you held/hold and then your title, i.e.:
 - "National Moot Court Team, Competitor"
 - "Student Bar Association, Auction Committee Chair"
 - "Intercollegiate Golf Scholarship"
 - "Thomas More Scholar"
 - Examples of law school honors and activities include:
 - Scholarships
 - Clinics
 - Law Review/Gonzaga Journal of International Law (include membership on editorial board and/or published articles)
 - Moot court
 - Mock trial
 - Client counseling
 - Negotiation competitions (indicate if you are selected for competition teams)
 - Dean's List
 - CALI awards
 - Legal fraternity
 - Student organizations (also indicate if you are an officer)
 - Undergraduate honors and activities may include:
 - Scholarships
 - Student government
 - Athletics
 - Student organizations
 - Debate
 - If you have extensive undergraduate activities, include only the most significant and those of greatest interest to a legal employer.
 - It may be wise to give serious thought about including highly charged activities. These may include:
 - Involvement in a political organization or campaign
 - Religious activities
 - Work for certain non-profit groups
- There is no right or wrong way to handle this; use your own judgment.

Experience

- This section can be called "Experience" or "Employment." Using "Experience" allows you to include volunteer, clinic, and externship positions in addition to paid positions.

- If you had extensive work experience before entering law school, you may separate this section into such groups as “Legal Experience,” “Business Experience,” or “Related Experience.”
- Most legal employers prefer that you list relevant experience in reverse chronological order.
- For each job, list the employer name, city and state, your position, dates of employment, and description. You may use one of several formats, but be consistent with each position.
- When deciding whether to lead with the employer’s name or your position, consider which is most impressive, or likely to catch an employer’s eye. Once you choose, follow the same format for each position.
- Describe any accomplishments at each job first, using action words (“Increased sales by 20%,” “Implemented new computer program”). Then, describe duties, again using action words.
- Use present-tense verbs for current jobs and past tense for previous positions.
- Avoid using first-person pronouns such as “My duties included...” or “As the tax clerk I...”
- Keep descriptions brief and to the point.
- If you had a number of part-time jobs during school, you may include a summary description, such as “Continually employed in a variety of jobs including ____ and _____ to finance undergraduate education.”

Special Skills

Indicate special proficiency in languages, licenses or credentials. There is some disagreement regarding the inclusion of Lexis and Westlaw proficiency. Some say it not be included, because all law students have these skills.

Licenses

Examples include: CPA, Real Estate licenses, and computer certifications. Bar memberships could eventually be included here.

- If you have one or two licenses, include them under another section, such as “Special Skills.”
- If you have several and have room for it, you may create a separate section.

Publications

Include all relevant publications. If you completed a single publication as part of law school or undergraduate work, you might include it under the section for that school.

Military

Include military experience as a separate section, or as part of “Experience” section.

- List the service with the inclusive dates, then list assignments underneath in reverse chronological order.
- Include medals received and rank at time of discharge.

Interests

This section is optional, but it does indicate a life beyond the law. What you include here may spark an employer’s interest and provide good conversation material for an interview.

Include items that are:

- Unique (bungee jumping)
- Demonstrate worthy personality traits such as self-discipline (competing in marathons), or suggest rainmaking potential (golf, tennis)

Also:

- Be wary of including controversial interests
- Resist the temptation to be too humorous
- Be truthful -- if you falsely claim to be a classical pianist, odds are that your interviewer will share that interest and ask you about it

References

- Do not include references on the resume, but on a separate sheet
- Provide their title, address, and phone number
- Do not include “References available upon request,” as it states the obvious

Falsification of Resumes

- Including false or misleading information on your resume could cost you your job and professional reputation.
- Anyone found to have falsified information on his or her resume will be barred from further use of the Career Services Office.
- Notice of the violation will be sent to the Dean for disciplinary action.

Resume Review

The Career Services Office will review your resume. Before sending it out, make an appointment to take advantage of this service.