

Drafting Your Legal Resume: A Brief Overview

Your legal resume is part of a holistic package of information you use to persuade an employer that you are a good fit and they should talk to you. It is, in a sense, your personal brochure, and it communicates a great deal about you to the reader. A legal resume will incorporate some of the same skills and experiences included in your law school application, but the framing and emphasis are different. Drafting it requires you to reflect on your skills and interests and begin the process of creating a narrative that will be central to your legal career and professional development journey. It is a living document you will return to often, editing, pruning, and adding to it as you build your skills and experiences.

Why is a resume important to your job application?

In 30 – 60 seconds, recruiters and hiring attorneys need to learn 3 key things about you. They will translate that information into 3 things they will use to decide if you could be a fit for their position:

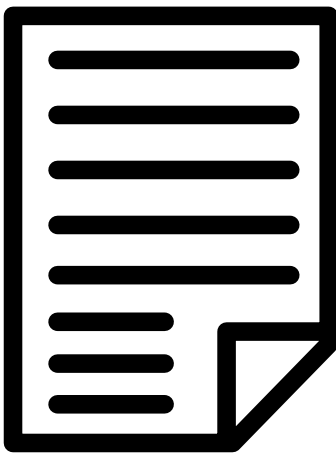
What You Know → What Are You Going To Be Able To Do For Us?

What You Can Do → What Is Your Value To Our Work?

Who You Are → Do You Understand Our Needs?

Your resume is about you, but it is much more about your audience, and it is extremely important to keep that in mind when you are drafting it. Legal employers are lawyers themselves, so when you reflect on your skills and experiences and how to draft your resume, think in terms of what your audience values:

- Lawyers are **advocates** ... so use language that is persuasive and markets yourself as if you are your own client.
 - Lawyers are adept at **critical reading** ... so use relevant, substantive language to describe your experiences. Show don't tell.
 - Lawyers are professional **technical writers** ... so make sure your grammar and spelling are perfect.
 - Lawyers are **procedure- and detail-oriented** ... so use purposeful descriptions to spell out your relevant skills and experiences.
 - Lawyers are **time-conscious and time-strapped** ... so be concise and use helpful, expected formatting that is legal industry standard.
 - Lawyers are **researchers and investigators** ... so be truthful and do your research.
 - Lawyers operate within a set of **professional rules, norms, and forms** ... so you do not want to stand out in the wrong ways. Follow the rules and use your mastery of content and formatting to make you stand out.
 - The practice of law is characterized by high expectations for **logic, reason, and clarity** ... so your resume should be well reasoned, thoughtful, and consistent throughout.
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What is a legal resume?

- One-page highlight reel
- Crafted with *legal* employers in mind
- Focus on skills transferable to the legal world
- Professional, mature examples and framing
- Concise, clear, well-reasoned (like legal writing!)
- Also a writing sample

What are important legal resume considerations?

- Even, comfortable margins (ideally 1.0" but never less than 0.5") all around
- Use one clear font throughout: consistent and restrained use of bold, italics, etc.
- Use 12-point black standard font (Times New Roman is the most common); can use up to 14 or 16 for headers/name
- No graphics, no charts, no photos, no side-by-side columns of information
- Use action verbs, avoid passive language
- Use sentence fragments that begin with an action verb to describe your job responsibilities rather than full sentences
- List info in your experience section **in reverse chronological order**
- Consistency is key! Dates, places, etc.
- Bullets are preferable to paragraph form as they are easier for the reader
- 3 Main Sections:
 - > Education
 - o Law school first, graduation date as a future date
 - o Juris Doctor is a doctoral degree (do not say Juris Doctorate)
 - o While still a student, your degree is "Juris Doctor Candidate"
 - o List Honors and Activities: group them under the relevant educational institution and do not repeat them elsewhere on your resume
 - > Experience
 - o Include jobs, internships and substantial volunteer or leadership opportunities (it doesn't matter if it was paid or unpaid)
 - o Reverse chronological order (most recent at the top)
 - o Emphasize transferable skills
 - o Use active, past tense verbs; avoid "assisted" and other diminishing verbs
 - o Use a clear and easy to read format
 - > CATCH ALL SECTION (title will change based on what you choose to highlight)
 - o Language skills
 - o Professional affiliations
 - o Interests
 - o Advanced technical skills
 - o Publications
 - o Community involvement
 - o Patent bar eligibility
 - o Relevant certifications
- Remove from your incoming resume:
 - o Objective statement
 - o High school information
 - o A generally titled "skills" section (use your descriptions of your experiences to SHOW your skills)
 - o "References available upon request"
 - o Irrelevant or basic information
 - o Things applicants are expected to have in 2024 (e.g., Microsoft Office, Google Suite, Lexis Nexis)

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EDUCATION

Campbell University School of Law

Raleigh, NC

Juris Doctor Candidate

May 2023

Honors: Full Academic Scholarship

Wake Forest University

Winston-Salem, NC

Bachelor of Arts, Economics, *magna cum laude*, GPA: 3.78

May 2019

Honors: Wake Forest Academic Scholarship; Dean's List (5/8 semesters)

Activities: *President*, Pi Gamma Mu Social Science Honor Society; *Editor*, Old Gold & Black Newspaper; *Captain*, Varsity Tennis Team

Study Abroad: Barcelona, Spain (Spring 2016)

EXPERIENCE

United States Senator Jane Smith

High Point, NC

Senate Press Intern

January 2018 – May 2018

- Conducted daily review and analysis of press coverage on constituent issues to verbally brief legislative aides and compile daily written press reports
- Coordinated medal ceremonies and flag requests with appropriate staff members
- Spent week in Washington, DC office observing and preparing committee team for Senate Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs hearing on banking reform

Wake Forest University

Winston-Salem, NC

Resident Assistant

August 2018 – May 2019

- Assisted resident director in management of residence halls
- Designed and implemented educational and social activities for 140 college residents
- Mediated roommate disputes
- Chaired governing body that adjudicated residence hall rule violations

The Old County Club

Winston-Salem, NC

Bartender/Waiter

May 2017 – December 2018

- Engaged in prompt and professional customer service to ensure satisfaction among patrons
- Served as waiter for special events with 50 to 400+ in attendance
- Maintained running inventory of all alcohol and non-revenue items
- Trained new employees and special event personnel on club policies and procedures

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Wake County ASPCA, Volunteer, May 2017-present

Forsyth County Habitat for Humanity, Volunteer, 2014-2017

Girls on the Run, Coach