

GEORGETOWN LAW

Graduate Professional Development: Resume Self-Assessment

The following is a list of questions you may want to ask yourself before finalizing your resume.

1. Is your resume no more than one page in length, or two pages in the event that (a) you are have over five years of experience, or (b) you are applying for an NGO-type position?
2. If you need to save space, have you provided your address, phone number and e-mail in a single line below your name?
3. Have you included an appropriate e-mail address? Your Georgetown Law e-mail address looks more professional than your personal e-mail address (but use a personal e-mail if you are applying for jobs shortly before graduation).
4. Have you listed your relevant LL.M. courses (both Fall and Spring)? This gives the reader a sense of your commitment and professional interests.
5. Have you thought about listing any relevant courses that you took toward your J.D. degree, if you are in a specialized program (e.g., Tax or Securities)? This might give the reader a sense of how you became interested in that area of specialization.
6. Have you included the GPA for your J.D. (e.g., 3.42/4.0)? If you were in the top 1/3 or higher and/or your GPA is greater than 3.0, state this information. Otherwise, do not include your class rank or GPA. If your J.D. GPA is based on a different grading system, describe as “4.3/5.0” or “88.4/99.00” to demonstrate the scale. Additionally, you should include GPA from each of your schools (undergraduate, J.D. and LL.M.) or omit it from each educational entry.
7. Have you included your cumulative GPA for your LL.M., if you are applying for jobs in the Spring semester? For example, “Cumulative GPA: 3.2/4.0 (3/6 grades still outstanding for Fall semester).”
8. Do you have any writing awards from your J.D. program? Remember that legal writing skills are much sought after by employers.
9. Did you write any relevant research papers in the Fall semester or during your J.D. program, or are you writing any this semester? If so, give the full title.
10. If you have been a research assistant in your LL.M. or J.D. programs, have you stated the name and area of expertise of the supervising professor, as well as any publications with which you assisted?
11. Have you mentioned any other non-academic activities? We recommend that you do not include sporting, musical or other interests unless they are outstanding or unique (e.g., National or State level athletics or a prestigious music or dance school).
12. Have you listed casual or unrelated work you did during or before law school (e.g., in retail)? Do not include this information unless it is somehow relevant or particularly impressive (e.g., preparing tax returns for a small accounting firm or pro bono law clinic, or working on computer programs for an information technology company).
13. How have you described your experience with drafting, legal research, etc.? Do not simply say “Researched various legal matters and prepared memoranda for partner” or “Drafted appellate brief for judge,” but add the relevant areas of law (e.g., “concerning matters such as tax litigation on foreign tax credit provisions, partnership dispute and construction of arbitration provision,” “regarding enforcement of restrictive covenant, anti discrimination issue and employer liability for personal injury,” or “regarding Part I of Title I of ERISA”). Remember, familiarity with a broad range of legal areas and legislation is a plus—even if they are not directly connected with your area of specialization in your LL.M. Refer to specific legislation by name, and spell out less obvious acronyms with which the reader might not be familiar.
14. If you have worked on any significant projects, mention them in more detail (e.g., “substantial involvement in advising on property tax implications of corporate buyer acquiring REIT, including drafting of tax

memorandum, discussing findings with client and liaising with State Revenue Office to obtain property tax exemption”).

15. Have you referred to the type of clients you have advised (e.g., “prepared tax returns for individuals, trusts and S corporations and actively participated in legal audit of North Carolina broker corporation”)?
16. Can you say you had “substantial client contact,” or that you worked “largely unsupervised” on any matters? This can be relevant if you have some small firm experience, or if you are a more experienced practitioner.
17. If you have an externship in your Spring semester, have you mentioned it on your resume? Once it has commenced, set out (in the present tense) what tasks you are doing and to whom you are reporting. Remember that employers like to see externships at relevant employers such as the IRS, SEC, PBGC or AARP because it provides “hands-on” practical experience.
18. Can you say you have supervised staff (e.g., “supervised team of six with two direct reports”)? This is relevant to a more experienced practitioner, but can also be relevant if you have performed significant non-legal jobs before law school.
19. Have you identified to whom you reported on particular matters (e.g., “prepared report on pharmaceutical industry for general counsel of client;” or “reported on research findings to human resource manager of client”)? Any client presentations you have given are a real plus (e.g., “presented findings to client’s HR team” or “provided training to clients, including HR directors and other HR personnel on topical employment issues, such as wrongful discharge and retaliation”).
20. Are there any speaking engagements, presentations or publications to which you can refer?
21. Are your job descriptions too general, or do you simply list tasks? Either way, you could be underselling yourself. Analyze your job descriptions to make sure you emphasize what is important to the target employer. Include experiences that show you are a qualified candidate for the advertised position.
22. Have you eliminated all extra wording? For example, instead of saying “Responsibilities included analyzing legal documents...,” just say “Analyzed legal documents...”.
23. Have you listed information from left to right? We recommend listing information in this order: Firm or organization; city and state; title; dates worked; job description. List dates after other information rather than first, and list job responsibilities in order of importance to your target audience, emphasizing those that will impact the particular employer.
24. Have you had a friend or colleague review your resume? A fresh set of eyes on your document may discover typos or other minor problems that you have glossed over from reading the document too many times.