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PREPARING AN EFFECTIVE RESUME

PURPOSE

Conservative, succinct, accurate and relevant are the key words for preparing your legal resume. Do not allow your busy schedule to pressure you into presenting anything less than perfect. It is imperative that your resume highlights the qualifications you bring to the table for each individual employer.

YOUR RESUME SHOULD

- Highlight the academic and work experiences that make you a qualified applicant for that particular employer or job announcement.
- Demonstrate relevant additional skills and achievements.
- Present substantive information in an organized, succinct and eye-catching manner; and
- Represent your ability to write well and to pay close attention to detail.

YOUR RESUME SHOULD NOT

- Include a detailed biography.
- Be a document for all occasions, all jobs, all employers; or
- Be a compilation of all previous job descriptions.

FORMAT

Law student resumes follow a fairly standard format. Education should come first, followed by experience, and then other activities, skills, and/or interests.

Legal resumes should always be printed on 8½" x 11" paper. Use heavy bond paper that is white or off-white. Do not use dark-colored paper because many employers will make copies of your resume to distribute to others and dark-colored paper does not copy well. Your resume does not need to be professionally printed, but it should be done on a quality printer. Georgetown's Library has laser printers available for student use.

APPEARANCE

Consider using different methods (fonts, underline, bold, italics and caps) to highlight certain items in your resume. Doing so will often guide employers more quickly to relevant information. Be judicious, however, because too many font changes can make a resume look cluttered or distracting. Your ultimate objective is to make your resume easily readable, because most employers do not spend a lot of time on first reviews of resumes.

Do not use resume templates that are available in some word-processing programs. They are not formatted with a legal resume in mind and are not always readable by Georgetown Law's online interview scheduling program (Simplicity).

LENGTH

In almost all cases, it is preferable to restrict your resume to *one page*. If the essential information can be presented on page one, it is unlikely that any additional information you put on page two would improve your chances for an interview. Do not, however, sacrifice content (e.g., published work, significant life/work experience) to adhere to this recommendation. If your resume does go to a second page, be sure to include your name and “Page 2” in the upper right hand corner of the second sheet and staple the two pages together.

Resumes (for public interest employers) should be longer if your experience and activities warrant more than one page. These employers will want to see that your commitment to public service is genuine, and you can show that most effectively by recounting a thorough history of your work experiences and/or volunteer activities. In all cases, be sure that the most relevant information appears on the first page.

RESUME CONTENTS

Heading

Put your name, address, telephone number, and email address at the top of your resume (the Professional Development team recommends that you use your Georgetown Law e-mail account). Include your work (if applicable) and your home telephone numbers. If you are applying to employers in your home state, you may wish to include both your school and permanent addresses.

Job Objective or References

Legal resumes do not include job objectives or references.

Education

List your current (Georgetown Law) education first and proceed in reverse chronological order (e.g., legal education, graduate institution, and undergraduate institution). For each institution, indicate the month and year of expected graduation (not years in attendance) and the degree obtained or expected.

Under law school education, indicate grades if appropriate (see below), honors, activities, journal, clinic, and research projects.

For other educational subheadings, include information about your academic achievements, organizational memberships, and any other information closely related to your educational background. If relevant, briefly describe research projects or theses.

Describe any honors you received if not self-explanatory. If you attended a summer abroad program, you can describe it in a separate listing or as a category directly under the undergraduate or graduate listing.

Grades

The level of importance placed on law school grades can vary greatly among employers. For example, grades are often a significant consideration for large law firms, and at least one consideration for small and medium firms and federal government agencies. Conversely, public interest employers, whether or not they are interested in grades, are usually more interested in activities and experience that demonstrate a commitment to public interest.

Should you include your law school grades on your resume?

The answer depends on:

- The type of employer; and
- What your grades are

For most private sector employers and government agencies, your Grade Point Average (GPA) should be stated if it is a 3.0 or above. If it is below a 3.0, consult with the Professional Development team about whether or not to include it and how to respond to questions about grades during interviews.

For public interest employers, the decision about including your GPA probably will depend on what it is and how much a particular employer values academic performance.

List your GPA as it appears on your transcript -- DO NOT round up or down. If your grades improve over time, you might consider breaking down your GPA by semester or year to reflect the improvement.

Law school honors (Dean's List, scholarships, etc.) should be listed. You should indicate if you are in the top third, top 15% or top 10% but only if you have received confirmation that you fall within the particular category.

Experience

By using the term "experience" as opposed to "employment," you may include volunteer work, clinic experience, and internships in this category.

List your experience in reverse chronological order, beginning with the most recent position. It is not necessary to include every part-time job you held. For each position include the name of the employer, the location of the position, your job title, and the dates of employment, including months and year.

Include significant and/or relevant part-time or summer employment. Write a brief paragraph using action verbs to describe your responsibilities and accomplishments.

Resist the temptation to begin every position description with "responsibilities included."

Do not leave big time gaps on your resume.

Specialty Categories (Languages, Community Service, Interests, Bar Memberships)

The purpose of these categories is to highlight particular skills, relevant activities, personal interests, or other unique items. Fluency or proficiency in a language should always be included in your resume, preferably in a separate “Languages Skills” category.

Volunteer activities indicate community involvement and commitment, and they are particularly useful if directly relevant to positions for which you are applying.

Personal interests are usually included to spark conversation or “break the ice” during interviews. Whether or not you should include a personal interest section generally depends on the type of employer you are targeting (e.g., public interest employers generally do not focus on applicants’ personal interests). If you choose to include an interests section, be more specific, and only include items which you can discuss comfortably and in which you were recently engaged (e.g., running marathons, reading Russian literature).

We recommend that you also include a “Bar Membership” section listing the date of admission.

Do not include overly general interests, such as reading or traveling.

RESUME FALSIFICATION

Do not falsify or exaggerate information on your resume. The Law Center’s *Bulletin* states: “Misleading, inaccurate, or false information on these materials will be viewed as a violation of the Student Disciplinary Code.”

RECOMMENDED ACTION VERBS

This list should be used for both your resume and cover letter.

Accomplished	Excelled	Produced
Achieved	Exercised	Profited
Acquired	Expanded	Programmed
Administered	Formulated	Projected
Advised	Forwarded	Promoted
Aided	Fostered	Qualified
Analyzed	Gathered	Realized
Anticipated	Gained	Recommended
Appointed	Guided	Recognized
Appraised	Heightened	Researched
Argued	Highlighted	Screened
Arranged	Identified	Scrutinized
Assembled	Implemented	Selected
Assumed	Incorporated	Served
Attended	Increased	Simplified
Authorized	Initiated	Solved
Awarded	Inspected	Specialized
Bolstered	Instructed	Spearheaded
Briefed	Investigated	Started
Budgeted	Labored	Streamlined
Built	Launched	Strengthened
Calculated	Lead	Studied
Combined	Located	Submitted
Communicated	Maintained	Suggested
Compared	Managed	Summarized
Compiled	Maximized	Supervised
Coordinated	Monitored	Supported
Counseled	Motivated	Surveyed
Crafted	Negotiated	Synthesized
Critiqued	Observed	Targeted
Debated	Operated	Taught
Defined	Organized	Tested
Developed	Oversaw	Tracked
Devised	Participated	Trained
Directed	Perceived	Transferred
Discovered	Persuaded	Transformed
Drafted	Pioneered	Translated
Employed	Planned	Tutored
Encouraged	Prepared	Uncovered
Enlisted	Prescribed	Updated
Established	Presented	Worked
Evaluated	Processed	Wrote