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The Legal Resume

One of the first steps in the job search process is the development of your legal resume. The purpose of the resume is to introduce yourself to a potential employer. The content of the resume includes personal identification, educational background, honors and activities, academic standing, and employment experience. A good resume is concise and accurate. It should interest and inform the employer concerning your unique abilities and skills.

Employers typically spend one minute or less looking at your resume.

From this initial scan, they often make rejection decisions. For this reason, you should give serious effort and time to developing your resume.

GENERAL FORMAT

The resume generally has three sections: Personal information, education and experience. Personal information is composed of your name, usually in a bolder and larger font than other entries, your current address, a reliable phone number and your email address. The primary entries under education are schools and any corresponding activities and awards. The experience section lists present and previous employers and details about your responsibilities and duties. It is customary to list all entries in the education and experience sections in reverse chronological order (most recent first). It is critical to be consistent in the arrangement of your information under these section headings.

LENGTH

The general rule is to limit the resume to one page. You may list references on a second page. Some students –particularly mature students with considerable pre-law experience – often feel the necessity to go to two pages. However, it is advisable to summarize non-legal experience briefly so that it accurately reflects your experience but does not consume too much of your resume space.

If you feel that the information is pertinent to the employment opportunity, then include it, but evaluate your information under other headings to identify information that can be omitted or condensed without weakening the value of your resume as a marketing tool. You don't want to clutter your resume with nonessential information. You do want to emphasize your strengths and accomplishments as they relate to your employment goal.

APPEARANCE

Your resume should be easy to read or scan along the left-hand margin and free of typos. Your resume and cover letter should be on matching stationery, preferably white or off-white, 100% cotton bond paper.

While margins may vary to accommodate individual situation, normally a resume's margins will be about 1 inch on the left and right and between 0.6 and 1.2 inches on the top and bottom. Strive for consistency and centering throughout your resume in terms of spacing within the text and the white space at the borders.

Tabs should also be used in a consistent manner for the placement of similar information within individual entries under each heading.

Keep the same font style throughout your resume and choose a conservative and easy to read font that converts smoothly to the PDF format. Some fonts to consider include Arrus, Book Antiqua, Century Schoolbook, Courier, Garamond, Times New Roman, Calibri (the font of this document), Arial, Lucida Sans, Century Gothic, Maiandra, or GeoSlab. Font size should be 11 for the body of your resume and a larger font – at least two points – for your name. Using a 14 or larger font bolded for your name and a half point or a point smaller font for the address and phone information allows the name to be the focal point of your personal information.

Avoid the use of too many graphic elements to highlight or personalize your resume. When using format tools to arrange and organize your information, be consistent in your placement of these graphics

STYLE TIPS

It is appropriate to use bold-face print to emphasize your name, institution, and employment organization:

> **Elizabeth Wright**
> **Appalachian School of Law**
> **United States Attorney for the Southwestern District of Virginia**
> **Muldoon & Sullivan, Attorneys at Law**

Use italics to designate awards, honors, or activities as well as undergraduate/graduate major (s), and job titles, like this: *cum laude Intern*

Keep underlining to a minimum and use it primarily to separate various sections of your resume or to underline information that is properly underlined in accordance with punctuating guidelines, like this: