

Abraham S. Ovadia Career Planning & Placement Office

Résumé & Cover Letter Workshop

Core materials for your job search

- Résumé
- Cover letter
- An unofficial or official transcript
- Writing sample
- List of academic/professional references
(3 is preferred)

The Legal Résumé

- Assume the reader will spend no more than 30 seconds on the initial scan – your résumé must be clear, error free, and very easy to read.
- Put your résumé to work: highlight accomplishments and applicable skills. Each version of your résumé may be tailored to a particular employer (or type of employer).

Format

- The Ovadia CP&P Office has a suggested format. Ask yourself, is my résumé easy to read? Is the formatting applied consistently?
- Your résumé should fit on one page. Possible exceptions include extensive pre-law school professional experience, and certain government and public interest positions.

From the top to the bottom...

- **Name** – centered at top of the page, can be slightly larger than the text (which should be between 10pt and 12pt font). To consider: middle initials, nicknames, gender neutral names.
- **Address** – include both your email (professional email) and physical address. To consider: working in your home market.
- **Education** – reverse chronology – flush with left margin.
- **High school?** Usually not included, unless you are sending a résumé to a fellow alumna/us. You are applying to market where your connections would be otherwise unknown. You can also include HS in a section called “Affiliations,” if a member of an alumni organization.
- **Honors and Activities** – listed under the respective academic institutions where earned. If you have extensive honors and/or activities, you can list them separately. What is an “honor”? Scholarships, moot court. How about law review?

Grades

- Generally, include if 3.0 or higher. Round your GPA to the hundredths place (3.15). Why?
- If I don't include my law school GPA can I include my undergraduate GPA?

Experience

- **Experience** – If everything you’ve included is a paid job, you can call it “Work Experience.” **This section can set you apart from other applicants – How did your work help your employer? Include successes, give examples, think of transferrable skills that you’ve developed.**

Goal: the more interesting and specific information you include, the more questions you will be asked.

- What can you include? In addition to paid work, volunteer positions, significant community service endeavors, research assistant positions.
- Positions are listed in reverse chronology.
- How much information do you include? Rule of thumb: Succinct but descriptive – use action verbs.
- Complete sentences are not necessary, but if the phrase functions as a sentence, end with a period.
- Do not use personal pronouns.
- What if I had several positions with the same employer?

Additional information

- Languages – native, fluent, proficient, or knowledge of.
- Other interests or affiliations (can include community involvement, alumni organizations) should demonstrate commitment, discipline, confidence, leadership. Avoid including passive interests, such as reading, watching movies.
- Caveat! Be careful about including additional interests – be prepared to answer questions about your level of experience/involvement.
- Do not include basic skills in Microsoft, LexisNexis, Westlaw, etc.

Sensitive information

- Sorority/fraternity
- Political organizations

Submitting your résumé

- Printed – on bond paper (24 lbs.), white or ecru.
- Email – PDF attachment preferred method
- Your résumé must be perfect. Please reread, and reread again – and have someone from the Ovadia CP&P Office proofread for you.

Cover Letter

- The first writing sample that will be read by the employer. What's its purpose? Tell the employer why you are a good match.
- Concise
- Persuasive
- Well-reasoned
- GRAMMATICALLY SOUND

Recipient

- Address to a specific person
Mr., Ms., The Honorable Joe Smith,
(Dear Judge Smith)
- How do I find the right recipient?

Cover Letter Content

- Why are you contacting the employer?
- Reason why you are interested in the geographic location
- Interest in the legal practice area of the employer
- Strengths, attributes, and skills that will contribute to the position that you are applying for
- Availability to meet

Write the letter from the perspective of the employer
– why should they hire you?

First paragraph

- Introduction. Do not start by saying “My name is ___.” Instead: “I am a first year student at ...” and an explanation for why you are writing.
- If someone suggested that you contact the employer, include here.
- Geography
- In a nutshell, why you are a good fit?

Second (& third) paragraph

- What you bring to the table. Not a restatement of your résumé.
 1. What skills are transferrable?
 2. What separates you from the other applicants?
- Can separate as academic (second) and professional (third) (or vice versa, depending on strengths, relevance, etc.)

Conclusion

- Closing and interest in a personal interview