

Legal Resume Checklist

Once you have assembled your resume, go through this checklist to determine if any changes need to be made or if any portions can be improved.

1. Heading

- Proof the spelling of your name and address
- Professional email address
- Professional voicemail/answering machine message for number(s) listed
- Contact information is valid/correct for 6 months to come
- Present and permanent addresses listed (if during/nearing a school break when you'll be away from your present address for a while)

2. Education

- Start here unless you've been out of school three years or more
- Reverse chronological order (J.D. expected 20XX first, then Masters/Undergrad)
- Check spelling and ensure that schools are correctly named
- List degrees consistently (B.A. and J.D. or Bachelor of Arts and Juris Doctor)
- Proof dates of degrees conferred or expected
- Consider whether to list rank or GPA. If so, **NEVER ROUND UP!**
- List honors and activities in order of most pertinent to job or unique to you
 - Only list activities if you could talk about something meaningful you get from it
 - Highlight if you hold a leadership role/position within the organization
- No high school education or activities!
- Education should take up no more than 1/3 to 1/2 (maximum) of the page

3. Bar Admissions/Certifications (if any)

4. Publications (if any)

- If published in a scholarly journal or the like, list it in Blue Book form
- If numerous publications or speaking engagements, use addendum instead

5. Employment/Experience

- Tailor the title of this section for your experiences and for the employer
- Some examples:
 - Legal Experience (if any, should likely go first)
 - Work Experience
 - Customer Service Experience
 - Experience
- Volunteer experience:

- Can go under “Experience” or “Legal Experience” along with your paid legal experience(s) if it is pertinent or is related to the job you are applying for
- Or you can create a “Volunteer Experience/Community Service” section
- Make sure it is fresh, recent experience

Reverse chronological order

Highlight the most relevant experience

Quantify results produced, people managed, etc.

Include promotions received

Ensure most important info is on the left, least toward the right

If a veteran applying to government position, separate military experience

Leave out number of hours worked and supervisor info

6. Computer Skills

Don't add unless required by job posting or applying for an administrative job, especially if common (Westlaw/Lexis, MS Office, etc.)

7. Languages

Be clear and accurate about level of proficiency

8. Hobbies and Interests

Don't add so many you get to page 2

Consider the personal nature of your hobbies and what you want them to say about you professionally

Prepare for possible ramifications of mentioning your affiliation to highly-charged topics, such as:

- Political
- Fraternity/Sorority
- Beauty Pageants
- Gun Issues
- Women's Issues (such as abortion)

9. References

Don't have a reference section, as employers will ask for your references if they want them

Have three copies ready at every interview, with your contact information in plain view, preferably with the same heading as your resume

10. What NOT to Add!

Race, religion, gender, sex, age, marital status, children, weight, pictures or any other personal data

Hot topics (see # 8 above)

Cutesy or avant-garde tactics (don't send out wine bottles with your resume downsized and pasted over the label)

11. Proofing and Formatting

Spelling consistency

Abbreviation consistency (MN and WI or Minnesota and Wisconsin)

Indenting consistency

Boldface consistency

Italics consistency

Underlining consistency (go for **boldface** or *italics* first, as better options)

Ensure ease of readability by maintaining some white space

Check for mistakes such as “memorandums” (it is memoranda)

Check for errors spell-check won’t catch: don’t turn “public” into “pubic!”

Don’t use “counseled” or “advised” to describe legal job skills as a student

unless you are a certified law student

Highlight lawyering skills

Tailor descriptions and/or groupings to the particular employer...do your research!

Font size between 10 and 14

Conservative font choice (such as Times New Roman, etc.)

One page, unless you have worked professionally for more than ten years

If you must have a second page, make sure your name is on it and it is consistent with page one

If your second page isn’t at least 1/3 full, try to scale back to one page

If it is too long, see if you can’t let go of some undergrad “stuff”

Overall organization makes sense and looks good

12. Printing/Submitting

Print on white or ivory high-quality resume/bond paper

Match your envelope if possible

Consider mailing your resume in a full size (8.5 x 11) envelope

If submitting online:

- Bundle all into one document and convert it to PDF
- Label the PDF attachment with your name
- Proof the converted PDF before sending
- Send it to an alternate e-mail address to yourself (or send it to a friend) before submitting to ensure the PDF can be opened and read

13. Last But Not Least

Get a second, third, fourth or nineteenth opinion

Make an appointment with the CPD office, ask a professor to look it over, and/or have a classmate review it

The more eyes on your resume, the more likely you are to catch mistakes that could cost you an interview!