

Resume Feedback from Legal Employers

1. **A legal employer is likely to spend less than 30 seconds on his or her initial review of your resume.** Prove that you think like a lawyer by creating a resume in which you are an advocate for yourself.
2. **Typos are NEVER ok.** Never. Employers look at the resume as your first work product.
3. **Spelling and grammatical errors are the kiss of death** and are likely to immediately eliminate you from consideration.
4. **All information must be 100% accurate** (don't round up your GPA, don't fudge employment dates, etc.). Assume employers are conducting a background check (it is likely they are).
5. **Assume employers will do a Web search of your name;** clean up all social networking and blog posts before you send out your resume.
6. **Be prepared to discuss *everything* on your resume in an interview** (if you mention the thesis you wrote as a college senior, you should be prepared to talk about it, even though you may feel it was a long time ago).
7. **Avoid using the existing resume templates in Word.** The templates don't allow for the necessary editing and adjustments needed on a legal resume and can, in fact, show a lack of effort and creativity in producing the best possible resume.
8. **In the heading, use contact information that will make it easy to reach you.** Remember that **employers don't text; they phone.** **Make sure your voice mail message reflects your professionalism.** **Make sure your email address reflects your professionalism,** as well (use yourname@lawschool.edu rather than crazynickname@gmail.com). You may choose to set up a University of Chicago alumni e-mail (name@alumni.uchicago.edu) address by visiting <http://www.alumni.uchicago.edu/email.html>.
9. **Limit your resume to one page.** How will you be able to identify the critical legal issues on an assignment if you are unable to edit your resume to one page? Unless you have so much experience that you need to use more than half of a second page, edit your resume to fit onto one page.
10. **Employers like hard data and facts. Quantify where possible.** For example, "Organized fundraising auction. Chaired committee of 13 volunteers; raised \$7500 for student scholarships."
11. **Use white space, underlining, bold, capital letters, *italics* and font size thoughtfully.** Your decisions on these matters reflect your good judgment.
12. **Don't use fonts smaller than 10 point.** Attempts to save space with small fonts and narrow margins may challenge a reader wearing bifocals or reviewing your resume by the poor light of a commuter train or the coach seat of an airplane.

13. **Keep position descriptions active and short.** There is no need to repeat activities from one job to the next; concentrate on showing how you acquired additional skills or experience.
Concentrate on identifying transferable skills.
14. **Do not include a job objective or personal data.** To do so shows you are ignoring the advice of your career services office and that you're unfamiliar with the needs and concerns of today's legal employers.
15. Remember that **the experience section of your resume may include clinical work, internships/externships, research assistantships, volunteer work, etc., as well as paid positions.**
16. **If you include your language skills, be sure to indicate your level of fluency:** "Fluent in Spanish; proficient in Italian." If you indicate that you're fluent or even conversationally adept in a language, **be prepared to answer questions and converse in that language.**
17. **Use active verbs in your work descriptions** and begin your phrases with those action verbs. Avoid passive voice as well as the phrase "responsible for."
18. **Be consistent in format, punctuation and use of emphasis** (underlining, italics, capital letters, etc.) **from one position to another and one section of the resume to another.** Your ability to do so shows your attention (or inattention) to detail.
19. **Consider whether your honors and activities need to be explained, and if they do, provide a brief explanation.** Unless they attended your school, employers are unaware that "Bronze Tablet" honors indicate that you graduated in the top 3% of your undergraduate class and that participating in the law school activity "Streetlaw" involves teaching inner city high school students about the legal system.
20. **It's hard to read dates written in numerical format** (6/07-9/08). Instead, spell out the months, avoiding abbreviations (June 2007-September 2008). If you are describing a summer job or a school year internship, it is fine to list "Summer 2008" or "Fall 2009."
21. **Do not waste space by including a line at the bottom of the resume reading "References available upon request."** Include references on a separate sheet, using a heading that matches your resume heading in form and listing the references' contact information and the nature of the references' connections with you (torts professor, legal writing instructor, supervisor, etc.).

Additional Resources

- “Resolve to Manage Your Job Search,” Kathleen Brady, January 2009.
<http://www.abanet.org/lpm/lpt/articles/ftr01092.shtml>
- “Managing your Career in Turbulent Times,” Kathleen Brady, Rachelle J. Canter, Ph.D., Marcia Pennington Shannon, November 2008.
<http://www.abanet.org/lpm/lpt/articles/mgt11083.shtml>
- For a specific discussion about interviewing at midsize and smaller firms after coming from Biglaw, read http://abovethelaw.com/2009/03/interview_tips_biglaw_to_small.php and http://abovethelaw.com/2009/03/interview_tips_biglaw_to_small_1.php.
- “Government Jobs Elusive for Laid-Off Lawyers,” Marisa McQuilken *Legal Times*, April 20, 2009. <http://www.law.com/jsp/article.jsp?id=1202430029126>.
- For a listing of career counselors by state, visit <http://www.lawyeravenue.com/resources/career/career-counselor-locator-for-lawyers/>.
- For a list of career-oriented publications available and reviewed by NALP (the National Association of Legal Career Professionals), visit <http://www.nalp.org/reviewedresourceslist#couns>.
- For resources for a non-legal job search, visit <http://www.nalp.org/handoutsoncareerissues>
- Official Guide to Legal Specialties. Lisa Abrams (Director of Career Services at the Law School) (NALP/Barbri 2000). <http://nalp.org/productDetail/?productID=69>
- Work with a Passion: How to Do What You Love for a Living. Nancy Anderson (New World Library 2004).
- What Can You Do With a Law Degree? 5th Edition. Deborah Arron (DecisionBooks 2004). <http://www.nalp.org/productDetail/?productID=72>
- What Color Is Your Parachute? 2009: A Practical Manual for Job-Hunters and Career Changers. Richard Nelson Bolles (Ten Speed Press 2008).
- Transitions: Making Sense of Life’s Changes. William Bridges (Da Capo Press 2004).
- In Transition: From the Harvard Business School Club of New York's Career Management Seminar. Mary Burton and Richard Wedemeyer (Collins Business 1992).
- Sweaty Palms: The Neglected Art of Being Interviewed. H. Anthony Medley (Business Plus 2005).
- The Unhappy Lawyer: A Roadmap to Finding Meaningful Work Outside of the Law. Monica Parker (Sphinx Publishing 2008).
- Do What You Are: Discover the Perfect Career for You Through the Secrets of Personality Type. Paul D. Tieger and Barbara Barron (Little, Brown and Company 2007).

- Knock 'em Dead, 2008: The Ultimate Job Search Guide. Martin Yate (Adams Media 2007).
- The Right Moves: Job Search and Career Development Strategies for Lawyers. Valerie Fontaine (NALP 2006).