

Rutgers School of Law Career Planning Office: Resume Writing Guidelines¹

Define your target audience

- Your target audience is a busy supervising attorney who has less than one minute to read your resume.

What is the target audience looking for in a resume?

- Evidence that applicant will succeed in intellectual aspect of job, e.g., time-management, analytical ability, fact-gathering, creative problem-solving, stamina, attention to detail.
- Evidence that applicant will succeed in interpersonal aspect of job, e.g., deal well with people, work under pressure, negotiation skills, teamwork skills, good judgment & common sense.
- Evidence of good communication skills, e.g., writing & speaking, community organizing.
- Background specific to that employer, e.g., foreign language for immigration practice, scientific background for environmental firm, medical training for med/mal firm.

General Formatting

- Should be one page even if this is your second career.
- Font: Do not overuse font types, underlines or boldface type. Avoid anything smaller than 11 points.
- No typos, spelling errors, grammatical errors.
- Don't use I; don't exaggerate.
- Paper Color: off-white or white; avoid gray, blue, or other colors.
- Margins: Do not adjust your margins any smaller than .5 inches.

Heading

- Full name, no nickname. If gender is unclear, may want to use Ms. or Mr. Font size no bigger than 14-points; use bold and small caps.
- Write out full address. To demonstrate a connection to geographic area, use your permanent address also.
- Phone & e-mail address. No mystery e-mail (girlsjustwannahavefun@hotmail.com). Voicemail - brief, professional message.

Education section

- Reverse chronological order – law school 1st, with expected date of degree. If transfer student, list your previous school with dates of attendance.
- List your GPA if it is a 3.0 or above.
- Include honors and activities. Only include activities where you had a leadership position (organized panel on environmental law careers) or can talk about during an interview. Avoid puff - listing group in which you only went to 2 meetings and just ate pizza.

Experience section

- Can use bullets or narrative form.
- Include relevant positions, paid & unpaid, in reverse chronological order.
- Begin each sentence with an action word. Provide descriptions of job duties with emphasis on skills transferable to law – research, analysis, oral & written communication, negotiation, management of complex projects or people, development or implementation of policies, problem-solving, hiring & training new employees.
- Think about what specific experiences demonstrate the qualities employers are looking for.
- Think about what was distinct or notable about your contribution to a job or activity.

Additional Information

- Include an accurate description of language skills (don't exaggerate), and/or volunteer work, unusual travel or hobbies that you can discuss with enthusiasm.

Do not include

- "References available upon request". This goes without saying.
- Pre-college education unless highly regarded school, valedictorian or prestigious award, or want to show connection to geographic region that won't be clear otherwise.
- A Job Objective. Legal resumes do not contain a job objective.

¹Special thanks to Professor Sarah Ricks for allowing the Career Planning Office to use her "Resume Drafting Workshop" notes in the creation of this document.