

**University of Houston Law Center
Career Development Office
Suggestions for Writing the Most Effective Resume**

LL.M. and Foreign Scholars LL.M. Students

The purpose of a resume is to secure an interview and ultimately, a job. A resume should be a concise, well written marketing tool directed at specific legal employers. Resumes typically include the following information:

- name, address, phone number
- email address (only include if you check your email regularly)
- educational background and related honors or activities
- employment/experience
- special skills (language skills, for example)

The following tips are offered to help you to design an effective legal resume:

▪ **Be concise**

Your legal resume should be limited to one page, unless there is lengthy prior work experience. Remember that your resume is a tool to communicate data related to your background. It should provide the reader with an overview, rather than tell the whole story. Give the greatest detail to any past professional experience and communicate other, non-professional jobs with greater brevity. In cases where the job title says it all (ie. pizza delivery person, waiter, etc.), it is not necessary to describe specific job duties.

▪ **Be selective**

Your resume should be created with your strongest accomplishments in mind. In the interest of space, you will need to decide which of your accomplishments and skills will have the most meaning to a legal employer. For example, if you are applying to a firm which practices solely in insurance defense work, you may want to stress your involvement in moot court/mock trial competitions and your past (non-legal) work experience for a local insurance company. A well written resume should be general enough to be utilized with a variety of legal employers. However, there will be times when you will want to tailor your resume to highlight aspects and details of your background for a specific employer.

▪ **Use a chronological format**

Most legal resumes are in a chronological format. It is advisable to create a resume that lists your education employment, etc. in reverse chronological order. Remember that one function of a resume is to create a timeline for a potential employer. Make sure that your resume helps the reader trace your activities through time.

▪ **Use graduation dates**

Let legal employers know when you expect to attain your graduate degree; For instance, "LL.M. expected -May 2007" is much more useful to a legal employer than "University of Houston Law Center - 2005 to present". Keep in mind that some employers hire clerks with an eye toward longer term hiring needs. Indicating your expected date of graduation will help legal employers to better anticipate how you fit into their recruiting strategy.

- Be consistent with format and style

Bullets, boldfacing, underlining, italics and spacing are just a few of the elements that you can combine to create an appealing visual layout for your resume. Don't overdo it! Choose one or two of these elements and use them consistently throughout your resume. Likewise, present your information in a consistent layout. For example:

Smith, Jones & Brown, *Law Clerk*, September 1997- September 1998

Miller and Associates, *Intern*, May 1997 - September 1997

Acme Company, *Director of Public Relations and Customer Service - Region V*, Jan. 95 - May 97

The first two listings remain consistent in format and are easily readable. The third listing looks out of place because the visual format has changed. The abbreviation of the month, the inconsistent format (underlining) and the inconsistent layout (employer, title and date on more than one line) interrupts the flow of this "resume".

- GPA

If you decide to put your GPA on your resume, you should also include your class ranking. Law schools across the state and the country have different grading systems. The grade point average that equates to the top 50% at one school, may equate to a lower ranking at another.

- The finished product

Resumes should be printed using a laser quality printer and should be printed on professional-resume paper. White, off-white and light gray are preferable colors. Textured papers can prove difficult to read. It is always best to err on the side of conservatism when creating a legal resume.