



WRITING SAMPLES

Some employers will request writing samples as part of the application process. **Do not send a writing sample unless requested.**

For each writing sample, include a cover sheet (with the same header as your resume and cover letter) that provides the reader with context for your writing sample.

Writing samples should be five to ten pages long. If the sample that best demonstrates your ability is longer, you may edit the fact section or use only one aspect of the legal argument. If you choose to submit such an excerpt, be sure to indicate that in your cover sheet with a brief explanation of how the excerpt fits in with the longer piece. Note that some employers will not read your cover sheet, so be sure that your edited writing sample still makes sense to the reader.

Your career counselor cannot review writing samples for content, errors or writing ability. However, we offer the following guidelines. Choose the best example of your ability to analyze legal issues. The writing sample should be your own work and preferably something that relates to the position you are seeking.

Legal writing includes:

1. Application analysis (memoranda, briefs, judicial opinion language and law school exams)
2. Critical analysis/scholarly work (seminar papers, law review articles and case notes)
3. Legal drafting (contracts, interrogatories, pleadings)
4. Legal correspondence (letters to clients/other attorneys)

An employer requesting a writing sample is almost always looking for application analysis, since that is what the attorney or law student is going to be asked to do in his or her job. Assignments from LRW classes are excellent examples of this type of self-edited work. Although you received feedback and suggestions on how to improve your writing, the final product is all your own. In fact, you should go back over that sample and continue to edit it because your writing skills will improve with time. If you are selecting one of the LRW assignments, the trial-level brief or second memorandum is likely to have more real-world application than the appellate brief. Similarly, a seminar paper, case note or law review article may not be relevant to the actual work you will be doing for the employer – even if the topic is on point – and probably has been heavily edited. Of course, these publications can be listed on your resume, but may not make the best writing samples.

If you've already worked for a legal employer and have written legal memoranda, briefs or substantive motions, you may use these as writing samples so long as you obtain

permission from the employer, and redact any confidential or client information. The piece should still be something you have written yourself, such as a brief or a portion of a brief to which your supervising attorney may have only made minor changes.

Keep in mind that you can always submit a writing sample that you develop for the express purpose of a job application. One of your objectives in a summer position could be to produce a good writing sample. If so, make that clear to your employer and get the necessary permission up front.

Sample Cover Sheet for Writing Sample

LAW M. STUDENT

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WRITING SAMPLE

The attached writing sample is a legal memorandum that I drafted for my Legal Research and Writing Class. [Include a brief explanation of context, if necessary].