



# MSU Law Career Services Office

## Resume Guide

For current students, resume sections should appear in the order below. Once you have had at least one postgraduate employment experience, the experience section should appear before the education section. Pending bar admission and licensure information should be added to the top when applicable.

*NOTE: This is general advice for typical legal resumes in the United States. Exceptions may apply if you have had a previous career, are applying to a federal government or public interest fellowship position, are applying for a job in another country (including Canada), or if specific information is requested by an employer.*

### PERSONALIZED LETTERHEAD

#### NAME

- Should be larger and be bold to stand out from the other information
- This is your opportunity to state how you want to be addressed by the employer
  - If you go by your middle name/preferred name/maiden or married name, avoid confusion with all of your materials, for instance:

Formal Name on Transcript	Your Preferred Name	Suggested Ideas for Letterhead
John W. Jones	William Jones	J. William Jones
Jane Doe	Jane Hitched	Jane (Doe) Hitched
Xiao Jang	John Jang	(Xiao) John Jang

- If it is important to you, you may add a prefix like Mr., Ms., Mrs., Dr.

#### CONTACT INFORMATION

- Phone number, professional email address, mailing address
  - If possible, use your current or permanent address if located near the employer
- Customized LinkedIn profile URL

*NOTE: Use personalized letterhead on ALL application materials.*

### EDUCATION

- Reverse chronological order (law school first, then previous degrees)
- Institution name, institution location (city, state)
- Degree (be consistent: “Juris Doctor” & “Bachelor of Arts” or “J.D.” & “B.A.”)
  - Juris Doctor (not Doctorate)
  - Graduation month/year—not dates attended (Expected Month Year for those still in school)
- Include GPA (not rounded up) & rank #/#### if they add value to your application or are required
  - Be consistent: either list GPA for both law school and undergrad or neither
- Typical bullet point entries:
  - Academic honors, awards, scholarships
  - Relevant course projects (thesis, substantial research)
  - Extracurricular activities (journal, student orgs, competitions, study abroad)

*NOTE: The education section should be 1/3 of the page or less.*

## EXPERIENCE

- Reverse chronological order
- Employer name, location (city, state), job title, and dates employed (if you are presently employed, list the start date-Present)
  - Ensure consistent formatting with education section (bullet point alignment, institution and employer formatting, degree and job title formatting)
- Bullet points:
  - Use present tense for all current positions (not present participle ending in -ing) and past tense for prior positions
  - Begin with strong action verb
    - If employers only read the first word of each bullet, they should understand the actions you took/skills you gained at that experience
      - Good: Write, Researched, Advocated
      - Bad: Assist, Helped, Worked
  - Show relevant, transferable skills (research, writing, advocacy, analysis, project management)
- You do not need to list every job you've ever had; instead, highlight the most relevant experiences and skills

*NOTE: Include only information that adds value to/distinguishes you for each specific application.*

## OTHER POSSIBLE SECTIONS

- Publications
- Community Service (include dates)
- Certifications (e.g., CPA, CFA, real estate, engineering)
- Other Relevant Skills (e.g., technical, basic Spanish)
- Language Skills (native, fluent, conversant, basic)
- Interests

*NOTE: You can also have one additional section at the bottom of your resume by combining a few of these into one section e.g. Interests, Skills, and Awards.*

## DO NOT INCLUDE

- Objective statement
- LSAT score
- Information from high school
- References (do not say “available upon request”)
- Logos, graphics, headshots
- Vague skills (e.g., “good communication skills”)
- Information related to: race, religion, nationality, marital or family status, date of birth, TOEFL
- Abbreviations or acronyms (MSU Law)
- Previous salary information or whether a position was paid or unpaid
- Whether the position was full or part time
- Personal pronouns (I, my, we, our)
- Basic legal research skills (e.g., Lexis, Westlaw)
- Basic computer skills (e.g., Excel, typing speed)

## FORMAT

- 1 page only (if you have extensive work history or publications, meet with a CSO adviser)
- Right, left, and bottom margins not larger than 1 inch, but not smaller than .75 inches
- Top margin may be smaller to have the personalized letterhead closer to the edge of the page
- No pre-set templates
- Black ink only
- Use professional bullet points, the most common is a solid sphere (•)
- Font styles (Garamond, Palatino, Times New Roman, Arial, Cambria)
- Easily readable font size 11 - 12 (may use slightly larger for headings)

*NOTE: Combine all of your application materials into one pdf.  
Save your document to include your name and the employer name.*

## DON'T FORGET

- Avoid grammatical errors and typos
- Check for consistent bolding, underlining, spacing, dashes (-, -, —), use of periods at the end of bullet points, date formats (Nov. 2014 v. 11/2014), etc.

*NOTE: Never submit a resume without another set of eyes looking at it.*