

Delaware Law School

Resume and Cover Letter Guide

Presented by the Career Development Office

DelawareLawCareers@widener.edu

(302) 477-2179

Tanea McDonald, Esq. | Assistant Dean | tmcdonald@widener.edu

Lauren Damiano, Esq. | Associate Director | ldamiano@widener.edu

Emily Shim | Coordinator | ejshim@widener.edu

Your Resume

Goal of Your Resume

Your resume is your written introduction to a potential employer—the first impression that an employer has of you. It is sometimes your one and only opportunity to highlight your skills, accomplishments, and qualifications for a particular position. Your resume must be both clear—providing specifics about your experience—and persuasive, steering the reader to you over other well-qualified applicants. It should entice the reader to want to learn more about you.

Your resume also serves as your first writing sample. It should highlight your ability to present information in an organized, clear, concise, and visually appealing manner. Increased **white space** is encouraged.

Your resume should also include “Action Words”—words that align with the actual work of a lawyer while steering clear of empty buzzwords. A list of appropriate words is attached.

It is imperative that you follow the “**1 PAGE RULE**” for law student legal resumes. Your resume must be 1 PAGE.

The primary goal of a legal resume is to get you an interview.

Nuts and Bolts of Your Resume

EDUCATION, SKILLS, and EXPERIENCE are the nuts and bolts of your resume. You must highlight them with intentionality and specificity. Let's look at each section in turn:

EDUCATION

- List your Education in reverse chronological order—start with law school and work your way backwards.
- Include all relevant information, such as:
 - Schools attended
 - Degrees received
 - Dates (month and year) of graduation (for law school *expected* date of graduation)
 - Majors and other concentrations of study
 - GPA and Class Rank
 - Most employers expect to see your GPA and Class Rank at the top of your resume, but it is up to you as to whether you include them or not. Make an informed decision on whether to include one, both, or neither. The decision is YOURS.
 - ***Option—If your GPA is lower than 3.0, you may want to include your Class Rank instead.***
 - Academic honors (summa, magna, or cum laude)
 - Certificate of Achievement awards (with an indication “highest grade in the class” in parentheses)—you do not need to include specific class grades.
 - Extracurricular activities of significance—select activities that demonstrate leadership, ability to collaborate with others, time management, and performance under pressure.
 - Associate degrees and high school education should be OMITTED—**remember this document must be one (1) page.**

SKILLS

- Highlight the skills that you either learned or employed to accomplish a certain task, focusing on those skills that are also essential to the practice of law, such as:
 - Completing research
 - Writing
 - Drafting
 - Interacting with clients/customers
 - Negotiating

- Managing people or projects
 - Collaborating
 - Translating
- Dig deep and draw the connections between the skills that you gained in your previous employment, whether legal or not, and bullet those transferable skills.

EXPERIENCE

- All work experience should be listed with dates of service in reverse chronological order.
- Include the full name of the employer including city and state, as well as your specific title.
- For legal experiences, be specific. Include:
 - The type of practice/court—civil, criminal, commercial, etc.
 - Specific types of documents—pleadings, motions, demands, etc.
 - Specific types of cases, depositions, mediations, arbitrations, motions, trials, etc.
 - The more you let the employer know about your experience level and familiarity with the practice of law, the better.

Professionalism Pointers

The **LEGAL RESUME FORMAT** is likely different from resumes used in other professions or resumes used for non-legal positions. Here are a few rules to follow:

- Choose a commonly used professional font such as **Garamond** or **Times New Roman**. The preferable font size is 11- or 12-point font.
- 1-inch margins all around is highly suggested.
- Do NOT include pictures or other visuals.
- Do NOT include colors or graphics.
- Legal resumes for law students do NOT include SUMMARY, OBJECTIVE, or SKILLS section.
- All information presented on your resume MUST be honest, accurate, and free from embellishment.
- Avoid including political and religious views/affiliations in your resume and cover letter.
- Scrub your social media. Background checks at most firms include thorough social media reviews.
- If you send your resume electronically, be sure to convert it to a PDF file first to avoid any formatting or conversion issues.
- Remember to name your document in a way that will allow employers to find it easily.
- **PROOFREAD, PROOFREAD, PROOFREAD**—Have at least 1 other person proofread your documents. Look for:
 - Typos
 - Proper tense
 - Correct spelling of firm names and firm contacts

Jace Winters

225 Clearwater Road, Fort Washington, PA 19034 • jacewinters@email.com • 215-123-1234

EDUCATION

Widener University Delaware Law School, Wilmington, DE J.D. expected May 2027
Juris Doctor Candidate

GPA: 3.0/4.0

Leadership: First Generation Law Students' Association, *Secretary*; Military Law Society, *Treasurer*

Drexel University, Philadelphia, PA B.A. awarded May 2022
Communication; minor in Political Science

GPA: 3.2/4.0

Thesis: "Exploring the Effects of Social Media on Political Candidates' Campaign Strategies"

EXPERIENCE

Harrison Book, PLLC., Philadelphia, PA January 2024 – July 2024
Law Clerk

- Researched various commercial litigation issues including employment disputes, breaches of contract, and partnership disputes
- Drafted legal documents including motions, petitions, and memorandums
- Observed mediations, client meetings, and hearings

Harvest Grille, Ambler, PA August 2022 – November 2023
Shift Manager and Server

- Managed evening wait staff of six
- Resolved customer service complaints
- Monitored and maintained safety and quality control measures to ensure customer and staff safety

Manufacturers' Golf and Country Club, Fort Washington, PA Summer 2021 and 2022
Camp Counselor/ Swimming Instructor

- Supervised elementary-aged children for sports-themed camp during multiple four-week sessions
- Encouraged development of campers' leadership, teamwork, and communication skills by guiding campers through a major community service project for the unhoused
- Engaged in interactive team building exercises and active play

SKILLS AND INTERESTS

Proficient in French. Interests include golf, swimming, film appreciation, and car maintenance.

Natalie Greene

2121 Fairfield Road, Apt 2A, Wilmington, DE 19803 • npgreene@email.com • 302-123-1234

EDUCATION

Widener University Delaware Law School, Wilmington, DE J.D. expected May 2025

Juris Doctor Candidate

GPA: 3.15/4.0

Rank: Top 33.3%

Journal:

Delaware Journal of Corporate Law, Assistant Articles Editor

Honor:

Abe Graham Intramural Mock Court Competition, *Best Speaker*

Leadership:

Dean's Advisory Committee, *President*

University of Malta, Valletta, Malta

Summer 2023

Courses in Admiralty Law and International Relations

Pennsylvania State University, University Park, PA

B.A. received May 2021

History; minor in Global Studies

Honor:

Recipient of Scholar-Athlete Scholarship, 2017 – 2021

EXPERIENCE

Davidson & Powell, LLP, Wilmington, DE

August 2024 – Present

Law Clerk

- Draft discovery request and motions including motions to compel
- Correspond with opposing counsel to ensure the submission and receipt of all discovery
- Attend hearings and assist attorneys in preparing trial notebooks
- Research legal and factual questions regarding patent, trademark, and unfair competition issues

Harrison Book, PLLC, Philadelphia, PA

May 2024 – August 2024

Law Clerk

- Researched commercial litigation issues such as partnership disputes and breaches of contract
- Drafted documents including motions, petitions, and memorandums
- Observed mediations, client meetings, and hearings

Professor Kat Reyes, Widener University Delaware Law School, Wilmington, DE

January 2024 – May 2024

Research Assistant

- Researched federal promotion of home ownership through subsidies
- Proofread, cite-checked, and edited article on the potential risks of promoting homeownership

The Honorable Jane Clarke, 11th District Court, New Castle, DE

September 2023 – December 2023

Judicial Intern

- Reviewed caseload for upcoming civil dockets
- Observed guardianship and probate dockets and discussed proceedings with judge and staff attorneys
- Conducted research on LexisNexis to supplement Judge Clarke's paper on guardianship fees
- Accompanied court investigator to interview a proposed ward

SKILLS AND INTERESTS

Proficient in Spanish. Interests include yoga, running (2023 Philadelphia Trail Marathon finisher), science fiction, and gardening.

Your Cover Letter

- 3 paragraphs
 - *Paragraph 1*—where you talk about yourself as a law student
 - Recommender—On recommendation of ...
 - The full name of your law school
 - Your classification
 - Your GPA/Class rank
 - Extracurricular involvement
 - *Paragraph 2*—where you talk about your work experience
 - Detail specific roles and skills learned/employed.
 - Focus only on the skills that are essential to the practice of law, such as research, writing, communication with clients, problem-solving, document review, etc.
 - *Paragraph 3*—where you state why you are excited about THIS employer
 - You want to be specific—no surface level reasons here.