

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

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, EXPERIENCE, and INTERESTS 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.**

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.
- Within experience descriptions, 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.

INTERESTS

- Though it may seem unnecessary, highlighting your interests at the bottom of your resume is a great way to connect with potential employers. Shared interests often serve as icebreakers during job interviews.
- Be specific about your interests; listing “reading mystery novels” is more of a conversation starter than simply saying “reading.” Don’t be afraid to stand out, as long as your interests are appropriate to discuss in a professional setting.
- If you are multilingual, you may highlight your language skills by changing the header for this section of your resume to “**SKILLS AND INTERESTS.**” Then, you can list your language skills as in the example below:
 - “Proficient in Spanish and French. Interests include watching horror movies, playing tennis, and skiing. Volunteer at the Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia NICU.”
 - Other skills that you may highlight are technical skills that are highly unusual for a law student to possess, such as proficiency in coding.
 - Do NOT list skills that employers expect law students to already be proficient in, such as proficiency with Microsoft Office, writing, researching, or other “soft” skills. If you must highlight these skills, incorporate them into job descriptions.

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

Wilmington University Delaware Law School, Wilmington, DE J.D. expected May 2027

Juris Doctor Candidate

GPA: 3.0/4.0

Activities: First Gen Law Student 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 a 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, car maintenance, and volunteering.

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

INTERESTS

Yoga, running (2023 Philadelphia Trail Marathon finisher), science fiction, and gardening.

Your Cover Letter

- Your cover letter SHOULD NOT be a restatement of your resume—this is where you highlight additional information about yourself and your skills.
- Your cover letter is not a personal statement, but rather a formal business letter. Keep it professional, and do not delve into too many details about your personal life.
- When addressing a cover letter to a judge, be sure to say “The Honorable [Full Name]”
 - Example: The Honorable Sarah Graf
Clark County Court of Common Pleas
- Etiquette is crucial when greeting your recipient. Keep the following pointers in mind:
 - Greet attorneys using “Mr.” or “Ms.”: “Dear Mr. Jones” or “Dear Ms. Dennison”
 - Greet judges using “Judge”: “Dear Judge Smith” or “Dear Judge Gardner”
- Three paragraphs
 - *Paragraph 1*: where you talk about yourself as a law student
 - If you have a recommender, state that in your opening sentence: “On recommendation of ...”
 - The full name of your law school
 - Your classification
 - Involvement in moot court, journals, and other relevant details not included on your resume
 - *Paragraph 2*: where you talk about your work experience
 - Detail specific roles and skills learned/employed, focusing only on the skills that are essential to the practice of law.
 - Examples include research, writing, communication with clients, problem-solving, document review, etc.
 - *Paragraph 3*: where you state with specificity why you are excited about THIS employer
 - You want to be specific—no surface level reasons here.
 - Be sure to read the job description thoroughly and match your language in the final paragraph to it.
 - If you are applying to government entities, be sure that your language matches their mission and purpose.

Jace Winters

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

January 3, 2024

Lucy Knutson
ChildFirst Advocates
33 Birch Run Road, Suite 2A
Ardmore, PA 19003

Dear Ms. Knutson,

On the recommendation of my contracts professor, Professor Jane Levin, I am writing to apply for a summer law clerk position with ChildFirst Advocates. As a first-year law student at Widener University Delaware Law School, I have studied diligently to achieve a 3.0 GPA for my first semester, putting me in the top half of my class. I have also become an avid member of the First Generation Students' Association and the Military Law Society, taking on leadership roles in both during my first semester of law school.

Over the course of my undergraduate studies, I had the chance to develop strong research and analysis skills through my coursework, which culminated in my senior thesis on political campaign strategies. I further honed these research skills over my time as a law clerk with Harrison Book, where I not only researched various commercial litigation issues, but also had the chance to develop my writing and communication skills. Through my observations of client meetings and hearings, I learned the importance of clear and empathetic communication.

The law clerk position at ChildFirst Advocates is of great interest to me due to my commitment to equity and public service, as demonstrated through my extracurricular activities, as well as my experiences with youth mentorship and support. By joining the ChildFirst Advocates team, I hope to contribute to its mission of empowering youth in the Philadelphia area through legal advocacy, school-based resources, and community programs.

I look forward to discussing my qualifications and interests with you, and I am happy to provide additional materials upon request.

Very truly yours,

Jace Winters

Natalie Greene

2121 Fairfield Road, Apt. 2A, Wilmington, DE 19083 · npgreene@email.com · 302-123-1234

December 13, 2024

John Jones, Partner
Smith, Smith and Jones, LLC
1 Main Street, 5th Floor
Wilmington, DE 19801

Dear Mr. Jones,

I am writing to express my interest in the Summer Associate position at Smith, Smith and Jones beginning June 2025. I am a second-year student at Widener University Delaware Law School, where I am the Assistant Articles Editor of the *Delaware Journal of Corporate Law*. During my time in law school, I have had the opportunity to hone my writing and speaking skills, most recently through the Abe Graham Intramural Mock Court competition, where I received the honor of Best Speaker.

During my summer internship with Harrison Book, I worked on matters related to business litigation, such as partnership disputes and breaches of contracts. The position allowed me to draft motions, petitions, and memoranda, as well as conduct legal research on very technical legal issues. My time clerking for the Honorable Jane Clarke of the 11th District Court of Delaware allowed me to observe the law in action and taught me to prioritize competing tasks; the experience also strengthened my communication skills.

As someone who plans to take the Delaware Bar after graduation, I am particularly excited about the opportunity to join your office over the summer. From my conversations with attorneys at networking events, I am aware of the collegiality within the Delaware Bar, as well as the positive impact that such collegiality can have on your legal career. Smith, Smith and Jones' reputation for providing high-quality legal representation in the areas of business litigation, bankruptcy, and corporate restructuring further piqued my interest in this position and your firm.

I believe that my strong writing abilities, commitment to Delaware practice, and demonstrated interest in business litigation will allow me to make a positive contribution to your practice. I would be honored to meet with you to discuss my qualifications in further detail. Thank you for your consideration of my application.

Very truly yours,

Natalie Greene