USAJobs Search/Alert Walkthrough

USAJobs.gov is the primary tool federal agencies use to hire new employees, including attorneys. It is also not the most user-friendly system out there, so we have created this walkthrough to guide you through the process of setting up searches and email alerts. Before embarking on this process, the first step is to create an account and log in (both links available in the upper right-hand corner).

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1 With some notable exceptions, including the Department of Justice, which posts every single attorney opening on their Office of Attorney Recruitment and Management (OARM) page: http://www.justice.gov/oarm
Conducting a Basic Search

The easiest, though not necessarily best, way to search on USAJobs is a basic search with a keyword and location. Here, we search for "attorney" and "Washington, DC" (which covers the whole DC metro area).
Narrowing a Basic Search

As we can see, searching for "attorney" in "DC" leads to 60 results—pretty good! However, by the time we get to the third page of results, we notice many non-attorney postings (such as Paralegal and IT Specialist). Additionally, many of these jobs are substantially above your pay grade. Let's narrow it down a bit, by selecting the relevant Pay Grades on the left-hand side. Generally speaking, entry-level positions for someone with a JD will be either GS-9 or 11, so let's select 9, 10, and 11.

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2 If you have significant prior experience working for the federal government, you may be eligible for employment at higher levels—be sure to talk with a counselor about the best way to approach your search.
Saving a Basic Search as an Alert

Narrowing down our basic search by pay grade knocks the total results down to 11 jobs that may actually be suitable for you. Let’s save this search — scroll down a little until you see Save This Search on the left side.
Once you click "Save this Search," you will be taken to the advanced search page with your search criteria all set. Just scroll to the bottom of that page to name the search, and set your email notification frequency (weekly is a good default). Now you have a job alert saved!
Advanced Search – Beyond “Attorney”

Many lawyers work for federal agencies in program offices, rather than Offices of General Counsel or similarly titled places. They frequently are in positions with names like “Program Analyst,” “Program Manager,” “Management Analyst,” etc. The easiest way to capture these positions is to use the “Occupational Series” label in the Advanced Search, which you can access below the Search button on any results page, or the homepage. The vast majority of these positions are either series 0301 (Miscellaneous Administration and Program) or 0343 (Management and Program Analysis)\(^3\). So let’s search for those categories, again with the pay grades restricted to GS 9-11, in the DC area. Note, the simplest way to search for the series is to actually add the number into the Search box (Instead of scrolling down to find it).

\(^3\) If you prefer to have fewer searches, or conduct them all from the Advanced Search page, the Occupational Series code for attorney positions is 0905 and for law clerk positions is 0904. Other popular JD-preferred positions include Equal Employment Specialist (0260) and Immigration or Asylum Officer (1801).
Using additional Occupational Series codes gives us 46 additional results! While many are likely not of interest (Data Analytics Specialist, for example), others are very intriguing, particularly for anyone with a policy interest (for example, the Peace Corps is looking for people to evaluate their partnership program with USAID on providing food aid called Feed the Future – a potentially perfect fit for someone interested in international development with a strong analytical focus). Lest you think these positions would not be a good fit, take a look at the “knowledge, skills and abilities” requested by the Peace Corps position: “Examples are researching or analyzing established administrative issues; or interpreting regulations and organizational policy regarding administrative or program issues to provide advice and guidance on well-precedented issues.” Certainly sounds like work for an administrative/regulatory/policy lawyer to me! This search can be saved as an alert in the same way as the prior Basic Search.
We recommend setting up searches for all locations you are interested in, and if there are any agencies that would get you to move around the country, set up a location-free search for those as well.