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WRITING SAMPLE GUIDELINES

Writing Samples
Always have one ready and bring one with you to every interview. If your sample was prepared in conjunction with a course, make sure it is reprinted so that written instructor comments are not included in the copy submitted to employers. If you are using a writing sample developed during employment, obtain your employer’s permission to use it. Be sure that the names of the parties and any other identifying information are removed. Six to eight pages is an ideal length. Twelve pages is the upper limit. If you use a section of a brief, use a cover sheet to explain. Make sure there are no typos anywhere in your writing sample. It is unethical to submit a writing sample that incorporates significant revisions by a professor, judge, co-worker, or tutor. Writing samples must contain only your own writing. However, this does not mean you must submit a first draft. If you have edited a writing sample in response to a professor’s or supervisor’s comments, that is fine. Writing samples must contain only your own writing. Law journal articles are not recommended because they are usually heavily edited by someone else and are too long.

In selecting a writing sample to provide to employers, follow our top ten tips:

1. **Legal**—Make sure your writing sample highlights your legal reasoning and analytical skills. For many students, a sample from your legal writing course, advocacy, or work you completed for a legal employer will be your best options.

2. **Confidentiality**—If you use a sample from an employer or externship, you must ask permission before using the sample and redact any confidential information, such as the party names.

3. **Length**—Obviously, follow any guidelines the employer provides for the length (do not exceed the page limit). But if no guidelines are provided, generally six to ten pages is appropriate. Ideally, you would provide an entire product (memo, brief, etc.), but if it is too long then provide an excerpt of your analysis portion and provide a cover sheet detailing the context of the case.

4. **Unedited**—Employers often request an unedited sample. This does not mean you have to use the original draft you tendered to your instructor or supervisor, but it should be your own writing. It is fine to provide a version of your writing that has been revised as a result of feedback from others as long as you are the one who made the revisions. Also, you should submit a clean copy (not a draft with comments on it).

5. **Recent**—Ideally your sample should be less than two-years old as your writing skills have likely improved with experience.

6. **Provide your own work**—If possible use a sample that was not co-authored. If you worked collaboratively on the sample with a practitioner, the editorial staff of a journal, or a moot court teammate—you need to clearly indicate which portions of the sample are yours.

7. **Include your name on your writing sample**—You should make sure your sample has page numbers and that your name appears clearly on the sample.
8. **Proofread, Proofread, Proofread**—Even if you have reviewed the sample many times give it another review by reading it backwards, out loud, or with a ruler. It should be free of misspellings, typos, grammatical errors, and all citations should be in accordance with the Bluebook and Shepardized.

9. **Have your writing sample ready when requested.** Some employers request writing samples along with your resume and cover letter. Other employers will request a writing sample at an interview. If you haven’t submitted a writing sample beforehand, bring a sample with you to your interview in case you are asked for it.

10. **Be ready to discuss the content of your writing sample during an interview.**