

Guide to Writing Samples, Transcripts, References & Letters of Recommendation

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Writing Samples

- **When to Submit:** It is unnecessary to submit a writing sample at the initial stage of the application process, unless the employer specifically requests that you do so. Judges almost exclusively will request a writing sample, while law firms typically do not expect a writing sample until the time of interview.
- **Selection:** In general, a writing sample should demonstrate the quality of your legal research, analysis and writing skills. It must be a completely error-free, neat, and well-written product that you alone wrote, that was not heavily edited. For many students, the first year legal research memo represents the best (or only) writing sample available. A law review write-on typically is not a good sample because it does not contain original legal research, just as a published piece is assumed to have been heavily edited.
- **Length:** While there is no set length requirement, ideally, a writing sample should be about 5-10 pages in length. If the original document is lengthier, it is appropriate to provide an excerpt, such as one argument from a longer brief. If comprehension will be impaired by editing, create a cover sheet providing the necessary information. See [Appendix 1](#) for a sample
- **Confidentiality Concerns:** If the work product you wish to provide is one you crafted while a law clerk, you will need to exercise care to protect the confidentiality of clients. Rather than using a black marker to messily hide the identity of parties, it is preferable

to insert a fictitious name (XYZ Corporation or Client A). Most firms and judges also will require you to obtain their permission prior to using a document you wrote while working for them. To alleviate doubt, it is advisable to indicate on the document that you are submitting the sample with the permission of the employer.

- **Presentation:** Employers generally dislike receiving writing samples in elaborate binders as it hampers their ability to copy the work in order to share it with other evaluators. Rather, simply create a cover sheet with your name and contact information as listed in your resume and the heading "Writing Sample." This also provides an area to include any necessary information about your writing sample, such as if it is an excerpt of a document prepared for class X, or that Arguments IV and V have been omitted or that you have the employer's permission.
- **Remember:** Even if you are not submitting a cover sheet, your name and basic contact information should be added to the top of the first page of your writing sample. You always want to make it as easy as possible for an employer to contact you, using any of your application materials they might have in front of them.
- **Review:** Be sure to re-familiarize yourself with the paper before you provide it to a prospective employer who may ask you questions about it during the interview.

Transcripts

- **When to Submit:** Like the writing sample, the transcript usually is not submitted with an initial application unless an employer specifically requests it. For this reason, if you have a very high GPA or particularly strong grades in relevant courses, you may want to mention those in your cover letter or reference them in your resume. Please see the CCD's Resume Guide or Cover Letter Guide on how to include those facts.
- **Presentation:** For any applications through Symplicity, there is a size limit on files. For Word or other word processing software it is rarely an issue, but PDFs may sometimes be rejected by Symplicity. For this reason, we recommend making an unofficial copy of your transcript in Word for use in any Symplicity-based applications. To do this, simply copy and paste from your transcript in ISIS into a Word document.
***** Remember to include your name and contact information at the top of this document and to remove your date of birth *****
- **Undergraduate Transcripts:** Most employers will not want a copy of your undergraduate transcripts. The most common exception is an employer seeking to hire an intellectual property attorney or clerk, as your undergraduate major and how you did in the relevant coursework will have bearing on your ability to take the patent bar. Some federal government employers with high security clearances may also request an undergraduate transcript. It is always a good idea to keep a copy of your complete undergraduate transcript in a file in your home in case you need it. The UF Levin College of Law Admissions Office cannot use the copy in your admissions application to help you

with such requests. You must get your transcript directly from your undergraduate school.

References

- **When to Submit:** If you have very impressive references (or a very strong letter of recommendation from a prominent jurist, see below), you may want to include a list of References in your initial application, but only if your application is unsolicited (e.g. through a reference or on your own initiative). In response to a job fair or job posting you should always submit exactly what the employer requested.
- **Distinguished from Letters of Recommendation:** Very few employers will request a letter of recommendation as part of your application. Most prefer to receive a list of references. A list of references requires no work on the part of the people willing to act as your reference. Instead you simply draft a list, after contacting each of your potential references to make sure that they are comfortable acting in the capacity on your behalf.
- **How many and who:** 2-3 references is most common. If you have 4 great references who would not be repetitive (e.g. not from the same work place or speaking to the same academic skills), then you may provide 4. More than that is not necessary. Personal references should not be used. Only people who have observed and reviewed your work in an employment or academic setting are appropriate.
- **Format:** The list of references is one of the simpler applications documents to create:
 - 1) **Your name and contact information as it is on your resume at the top**
 - 2) **Then, the word "References"**
 - 3) **A list of 2-4 names, addresses, email addresses and telephone numbers, each in paragraph form**
- **Explaining the Connection:** Often the connection between you and your references will be obvious as their employment will match a former school or employer on your resume. Sometimes your references may have changed employment themselves. In such a case a parenthetical should be used after the name of the reference, explaining how this person knows you and can speak to your skills. (See [below](#)).

Letter of Recommendation

- **When to Submit:** Most employers do not request letters of recommendation (exceptions are some State Attorney's and Public Defender Offices, and most judges. A single letter of recommendation from a very highly regarded jurist or someone with strong positive connections to the employer to whom you are applying may be included in unsolicited applications.

- **Format:** Letters should be sealed in an envelope and either directly mailed from the reference to the employer, or provided to you in a way that makes clear that the envelope has not been opened or tampered with.

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Writing Sample

This writing sample was drafted as part of my Legal Research and Writing class last fall. It has been expurgated for length. To explain briefly, I was asked to evaluate the likelihood of success on a motion to suppress some electronic evidence in the case of the defendant. Because I removed the fact section, it is important for you to know that it was never proven that the evidence in question – a series of iChats – was created and propagated by the defendant as opposed to someone else with access to the same computer.

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Unofficial Law School Transcript

Grade/Hour Totals

Hours Earned	Hours Carried	Grade Points	GP A	Transfer Hours
30.00	30.00		3.86	

***** FALL 2006 * CLASS = 1 COLLEGE = LW

COURSE	SECT	GRADE	CREDIT	CREDIT EARNED	CREDIT FOR GPA	COURSE TITLE
LAW 5000	4532	A	4.0	4.0	4.0	CONTRACTS
LAW 5100	4590	A	3.0	3.0	3.0	CRIMINAL LAW
LAW 5700	4599	B+	4.0	4.0	4.0	TORTS
LAW 5792	4707	A	2.0	2.0	2.0	LEGAL RES & WRITING
LAW 6750	4638	A	3.0	3.0	3.0	PROFESS RESPONSIBLTY

TERM GPA = 3.85 * EARNED 16.00 HRS * EARNED 52.50 GPTS *
 CARRIED 14.00 HRS

*** SPRING 2007 * CLASS = 1 COLLEGE = LW

COURSE	SECT	GRADE	CREDIT	CREDIT EARNED	CREDIT FOR GPA	COURSE TITLE
LAW 5301	8070	A	4.0	4.0	4.0	CIVIL PROCEDURE
LAW 5400	8237	A	4.0	4.0	4.0	PROPERTY
LAW 5501	8218	B+	4.0	4.0	4.0	CONSTITUTIONAL LAW
LAW 5793	8246	A	2.0	2.0	2.0	APPELLATE ADVOCACY

TERM GPA = 3.87 * EARNED 14.00 HRS * EARNED 46.00 GPTS *
 CARRIED 12.00 HRS

Appendix 3

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References

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