

SKILLS AREA RESOURCE SERIES

## RESUME EDITING TIPS

Many law students accumulate substantial legal experience during their law school careers and may find it difficult to fit all of their relevant information on a one page resume. A one page resume, however, is ideal at this stage of their careers. Nonetheless, it is important to have full, vivid descriptions of your legal jobs. Brief, vague, and broad descriptions do not have the same impact on potential employers. Tiny margins and/or tiny fonts (10 point or smaller), however, are not solutions for making room for more content because studies have shown that use of "white space" enhances a reader's ability to comprehend information on a page.

To fit detailed descriptions of relevant accomplishments on a one page resume, without the text looking cramped or cluttered, the following three approaches should be taken:

- **Prioritize.** Eliminate or shorten less relevant jobs/experiences. The most recent, most relevant experience should have the most space devoted to it.
- **Re-organize.** Try presenting information differently. List it as a bullet point under your undergraduate education, rather than as a full-blown description in the Experience section.
- **Use word processing editing "tricks".** Microsoft Word has many font, spacing and other functions that can be used to fit the same amount of text using fewer lines (beyond just using smaller fonts/margins).

### **PRIORITIZE:**

Many students start off with the resume they used for their application to law school, which often include a detailed list of undergraduate activities. Once in law school, the students simply add all of their law school activities without purging any undergraduate ones. Similarly, as students acquire legal experience, they simply add that experience to the top of their Experience section without reducing the descriptions of prior jobs. The result of this approach is that the resume will have only one or two lines describing the student's summer job with the Department of Justice and more space devoted to the camp counselor position he held as an undergraduate. It is important to prioritize.

With respect to education, it is not necessary to devote as much space to schools where you did not obtain a degree, schools from which you transferred, or study abroad programs. Some information can simply be put in a bullet point, or not included at all. Below is a "before" and "after" Education section of a third-year's resume. The original version uses 37 lines, and is in Times New Roman (TNR) 10 point font. The revised version uses 20 lines and is in TNR 11 point font. Note the following changes in the example: In the following example, it is unnecessary to include that the student spent one semester at a different graduate program before deciding to go to law school, so that school was simply removed. Also, because he transferred to GW Law School, his original law school needs only to be explained in a bullet. Finally, his undergraduate activities were significantly pared down with only more significant honors included.

**Before**

**JOHN DOE**

555 Jones Road  
Washington, DC 20000  
(202) 555-5555 [jdoe@law.gwu.edu](mailto:jdoe@law.gwu.edu)

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**EDUCATION**

**THE GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY LAW SCHOOL, WASHINGTON, DC**

J.D. expected, May 2002

Member: Energy Bar Association  
Black Law Student Association  
Activities: Winner, Trial Advocacy Class Competition  
Participant, Moot Court Competition  
First-year Mentor, Hispanic Law Student Association

**JOHN SMITH LAW SCHOOL, CITY, STATE**

(Transferred after 1999-2000 academic year)

Transferred G.P.A. B+

Member: Black Law Student Association  
Activities: Writer, The Revue (law school newspaper)  
Second Place, Moot Court Competition  
Honors: Dean's List  
Honor Roll

**UNIVERSITY OF VIRGINIA, CHARLOTTE, VA**

Began Masters Program in Negotiations and Conflict Management, Fall 1998

G.P.A. B+

Activities: Graduate Assistant

**UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND, BALTIMORE, MD**

B.A. in English, May 1998

Member: Junior Class President  
Student Government Vice-President  
Activities: Volunteer, Smith Senior Home  
Resident Assistant for dormitory and apartment (200-500 students)  
Honors: Honor Roll  
Dean's List

After

## **JOHN DOE**

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### **EDUCATION**

#### **THE GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY LAW SCHOOL, WASHINGTON, DC**

J.D. expected, May 2002

- Transferred from John Smith Law School, City, State
- Member: Energy Bar Association, Black Law Student Association
- Activities: Winner, Trial Advocacy Class Competition  
Second Place, Moot Court Competition (John Smith Law School)  
First-year Mentor, Hispanic Law Student Association

#### **UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND, BALTIMORE, MD**

B.A. in English, May 1998

- President, Junior Class
- Vice-President, Student Government
- Honors: Dean's List, Honor Roll
- Activities: Volunteer, Smith Senior Home  
Resident Assistant for dormitory and apartment

With respect to work experience, legal jobs are of higher priority than non-legal jobs; meaning, more space should be devoted to legal job descriptions. This is an example of a "before" description the Experience section.

**Before**

**FORD FOUNDATION FELLOWSHIP**

1999 Research Fellow. Designed independent program by establishing contacts with faculty and staff who specialized in international conflicts at University of Chicago and Princeton University. Researched and wrote report on government policies and civil rights violations in Punjab, India by interpreting and analyzing government documents. Presented oral report at Southern California Conference on Undergraduate Research.

**EXPERIENCE**

2003 Winter **Smith, Smith & Johnson**, Washington, DC  
Law Clerk. Conducted legal research and writing. Wrote briefs and memoranda. Assisted attorneys in preparing for trial.

2002 Summer **Department of Health & Human Services**, (Office for Civil Rights), Washington, DC  
Legal Intern. Examined and analyzed Supreme Court decisions and federal statutes to make recommendations for organizational policy. Analyzed federal regulations to apply them to state programs receiving HHS funding.

2002 Summer **Howard University School of Law**, Washington, DC  
Research Assistant. Researched and briefed materials including articles, cases, and federal statutes. Edited drafts of law reviews and other publications.

2001 Summer **Human Rights Watch**, (South Asia Branch), New York, NY  
Researcher. Analyzed provisions of international and human rights treaties and conferences and applied them to the human rights violations in Sri Lanka. Produced detailed analysis about these violations for policy suggestions to international government and non-governmental organizations.

2000 Summer-Fall **Gerkin Research Fellowship**, Los Angeles, CA  
Researcher. Interviewed Kosovar refugees and international and local organizations in major US cities to obtain facts and establish findings of human rights violations. Examined legal remedies provided to similar victims through International Criminal Tribunal for Yugoslavia according to international conventions and treaties. Formulated policy suggestions through which international organizations can provide viable remedies in ethnic conflicts.

1999 Summer-Fall **United Nations**, (Department of Economic & Social Affairs), New York, NY  
Intern. Interviewed UN officials from different agencies. Drafted briefs on whether current recruiting procedures used by agencies were in compliance with UN policies. Presented oral report on issues presented at World Conference on Development. Attended and briefed General Assembly and Security Council negotiations for ratification of treaties.

After

**LEGAL EXPERIENCE**

**Smith, Smith & Johnson**, Washington, DC

January – March 2003

*Law Clerk*

- Drafted and filed motions; prepared documents for production; analyzed depositions for 12 attorney labor and employment boutique firm
- Researched, analyzed, and wrote memoranda; briefed clients on legal issues
- Drafted motion for summary judgment in federal district court on behalf of union defending claim of Title VII racial discrimination filed by union member
- Conducted discovery for DC Public School system defending against benefits claim brought by terminated teacher

**Department of Health & Human Service (HHS)**, Washington, DC

Summer 2002

*Legal Intern*, Office for Civil Rights

- Examined and analyzed Americans with Disability Act (ADA) and Supreme Court ADA decisions
- Made recommendations for HHS regulations to assist public homes to comply with ADA
- Analyzed Food Stamp and Medicare regulations to provide guidance to HHS-funded organizations regarding eligibility and screening procedures

**RESEARCH EXPERIENCE**

**Gerkin Research Fellowship**, Los Angeles, CA

2000-2001

*Researcher*

- Interviewed Kosovar refugees and international and local organizations to determine human rights violations, and examined remedies available from International Criminal Tribunals

**Human Rights Watch**, New York, NY

Summer 2000

*Researcher*, South Asia Branch

- Analyzed provisions of international and human rights treaties and conferences and applied them to the human rights violations in Sri Lanka

**United Nations**, New York, NY

Summer, Fall 1999

*Intern*, Department of Economic & Social Affairs

- Investigated recruiting process and interviewed UN officials to determine compliance with UN regulations

**Ford Foundation Fellowship**

1999

*Research Fellow*

- Presented report on government policies and civil rights violations in India at Southern California Conference on Undergraduate Research

### **REORGANIZE:**

Past accomplishments and experiences do NOT need to be automatically deleted in order to include more recent or relevant information. Some information can simply be presented differently. For example, an undergraduate research assistant position job described in the Experience section can be added as a bullet in the Education section under your undergraduate institution. Study Abroad programs can be listed as a bullet under the school where you obtained your bachelor's, rather than highlighted separately. Rather than have a separate section each for Languages, Interests, and Community Service, you can combine that information under the Personal heading, and include your language skills, interests and public service work in one narrative paragraph.

### **MICROSOFT WORD TIPS:**

Aesthetics in a resume are important, so you should use formatting to enhance the look of your resume. **Note: It is important to keep formatting consistent throughout your resume.** Examples of editing “tricks” used in this handout:

1. To duplicate the separation line between your contact information and Education section, click on Format, select Borders and Shading. In the pop-up box, select the type of border. In the Preview section, make sure to select the option underlining only the Paragraph (not Text), and then click OK.
2. Shrink the space between entries on your resume by changing the font size to 7 point.
3. Use tabs and the ruler at the top of the document to line information up on both the left and right margins.