

Written Supplements to the Law School Application: Resumes and Addenda

Law school applications ask for a lot of information, but sometimes – in order to tell your whole story or to clarify an item on your record – you need to provide additional written supplements. Often these supplements take the form of a resume or an addendum. Be cautious when including supplemental information, however, as admissions committees have many applications to get through each year, and you don't want to overwhelm them with huge numbers of pages they didn't expressly ask for. You should only include a supplement if it is necessary to clarify some aspect of your application or to fully describe your skills and experiences. Any supplement you provide should be clear, concise and compelling.

THE LAW SCHOOL RESUME

Which Schools Want Resumes?

The number of law schools requiring or suggesting that students submit a resume with their applications is growing. Of the 19 ABA-approved, California law schools, six required resumes of the applicants for Fall of 2005 (Chapman, UCLA, Western State, Pepperdine, California Western, and University of San Diego); six expressly allowed resumes (UC Hastings [resumes "encouraged"], USC, UC Davis, UC Berkeley, Golden Gate, and Whittier); and the other seven had no instructions regarding resumes (Loyola, Southwestern, McGeorge, Thomas Jefferson, University of San Francisco, Stanford and Santa Clara). The following information will help you decide if you should submit a resume with your application, and how to create the law school resume.

Should I Submit a Resume?

Read the instructions carefully. Include a resume if it is requested (and follow any instructions provided for form, length and content); likewise, do not include a resume if the application expressly says not to. If no instructions are provided or the instructions indicate that students *may* attach a resume, consider including one if it could help you provide relevant information that is not addressed elsewhere in the application. A resume may be especially helpful for a student who has had a great deal of work experience, student organization and/or leadership involvement, or community/volunteer experience. While most law school applications will ask you to list your jobs, organizational and community involvements and you can certainly discuss these activities in your personal statement, using a resume will allow you to describe your involvements in greater detail and free up room in your personal statement for a more focused essay.

What Format Should I Use?

Writing a resume for law school applications follows the same general principles of writing a resume for a job. (See instructions for job resumes at <http://career.ucsd.edu/undergraduates/prepar-resume-covlet/resumes-coverletter-cv.html>). However, there are a few differences. First, you can omit the "Objectives" portion of the traditional resume and not waste space by stating the obvious. Also, in the "Education" section of the resume you can emphasize a strong major GPA (especially if your overall GPA is lower), list and describe college/academic honors you've received, discuss papers you've presented or had published, and you can emphasize classes you've taken that show a background in law, or have developed your writing/analytical thinking, or other skills. If the applicability of a class is not obvious based on the course name, consider including a brief description.

How Can I Use the Resume to Highlight *My* Experience?

Most importantly, though, you can tailor your resume's "Experience" section for law school by highlighting relevant experiences, including jobs, internships, community service, activities, and research projects, that demonstrate your skills, such as writing, public speaking, analytical thinking, leadership, etc. Instead of just listing the experience you've gained (which you will have already done in the application itself), consider adding a short descriptive narrative about your work while at that job, organization, or experience, or use bullet points to highlight your accomplishments or skill development therein. Unless you have other relevant skills that are not addressed in this "Experience" section, no separate "Skills" section is necessary.

What Else?

With a law school resume, space constraints are not as critical as they are with a traditional professional resume. If you have enough experience to justify using two pages, use two pages. However, you should

not include irrelevant material just to fill space, and, conversely, don't drown the admissions committee in too much information – be concise but complete. The information included should showcase your skills and experiences which are applicable to law school. Finally, as you should throughout your application, pay attention to spelling and grammar and use a format that can be easily read and searched.

ADDENDA

Why An Addendum?

You may have a weakness or an inconsistency on your application that needs clarification such as a low grade or a quarter of low grades, a disciplinary action, or a hole in your record. You can use an addendum to address these anomalies. You could also address a weakness in your personal statement, but, by using an addendum, you can provide some additional information and leave the focus of your personal statement on other, more positive topics.

What Does It Look Like?

An addendum is nothing more than an extra sheet of paper with a heading such as “Explanation of Disciplinary Action” or “Addendum Regarding Spring Quarter 2002.” If the application explicitly asks for explanations of special circumstances, reference the corresponding application question number in your heading.

What Should It Say?

The addendum should be brief, consisting of a short paragraph or two, and should not exceed one page. It should be typewritten. It should clearly state the circumstances of the situation you're explaining without making excuses. You should take responsibility for your actions, and show that you learned from the experience and did not repeat the problem again. For example, if your grades fell significantly one quarter because you over-extended yourself with a full class load, a part-time job and multiple extracurricular activities, you should first explain the situation, then acknowledge that you were over-extended, and that you have since acquired better time-management skills, or scaled back on your extracurricular activities to concentrate on academics. Finally, you should point out that your grades since then have improved. Likewise, if you had a disciplinary action on your record, describe the situation without excuses, what steps you took to answer for that action with the school or community, if applicable, and assure the application committee (with examples, if possible) that it will not happen again.

Why Will This Help Me?

The addendum is your opportunity to ease the potential concern an admissions committee might have when looking at your record. Be honest, straightforward, and unemotional. By all means, DON'T WHINE! If your explanation is reasonable and the facts are consistent with the rest of your record, the committee will consider it when reviewing your application.

RESOURCES

For more information regarding written supplements to law school applications, see the following Graduate School Library resources:

- *How to Get Into the Top Law Schools*, Richard Montauk, J.D., Prentice Hall Press, 2004.
- *The Ultimate Guide to Law School Admission*, Carol L. Wright, J.D., Marriwell Publishing, 2003.

For additional guidance, make an appointment with a UCSD Pre-Law Advisor by calling (858) 534-4939. You may also drop-in for a resume critique with a Career Development Advisor.