



THE LAW SOCIETY
OF NEW SOUTH WALES

RESUME WRITING FOR LAW GRADUATES

How to write a successful CV

Your CV is a tool with one purpose: to gain an interview. It should present you in the best possible light and convince a prospective employer that you have what it takes to be successful in this specific position or career.

You don't have much time to impress with your CV - research shows that employers scan read CVs - so to make sure it stimulates interest, follow these basic tips and download our CV template:

- Avoid coloured paper or type, fancy fonts or clever delivery approaches
- Be truthful and don't be afraid to sell your skills
- Keep the look simple and make your point quickly (download our CV template as a guide)
- Use the past tense and choose strong action verbs
- Avoid speaking about yourself in the third person
- Avoid jargon and acronyms that other people might not understand
- Tailor your resume for each specific application
- Include the company profile of the organisations that you have worked for but keep it short
- Make your CV results oriented: give proof to back up your capability statements
- Always proof read your CV

Include the essential personal information:

- Your full name
- Full address
- Telephone numbers (day/evening/mobile)
- Email address

Here are 3 things that will strengthen your CV:

- **Qualifications:** list both academic and non-academic qualifications in chronological order, giving grades. do not include irrelevant information.
- **Employment history:** beginning with your most recent job, include your responsibilities, duration of employment and reasons for leaving. Do not omit any period of employment for whatever reason, as this may prove awkward at interview.
- **Personal interests:** listing your interests is important, but do not generalise. For example, instead of simply saying 'football', you could expand and say that you have played for a local club for the last four years and are now publicity officer for the committee (but only if this is true).



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FAQ

Should I put my referees on my resume?

These need not be included on your CV. However, before Robert Walters can place you, we will need to carry out detailed reference checks for your most recent five years of employment history, so it is useful to have these ready.

How much personal information should I include?

Generally, you should avoid too much personal information on your resume. Remember the employer is looking for an overview of your skills, so think about what is relevant.

Should I put my photo on my resume?

You should try and avoid inserting any photographs or graphics onto your resume.

Should I put my hobbies / interests on my resume?

It is fine to include hobbies and interests on your resume but always consider if they are likely to add or detract from your resume. Remember not everyone enjoys the same pastimes.

Should I include academic or extra curricular achievements on my resume?

Definitely, such achievements as mooted or President of the Student Law Society may show leadership skills and any involvement in extra curricular activities will be well received by an employer looking for staff who demonstrate a work/life balance.

Should I put my work email address on my resume?

You should avoid using your work contact details when applying for other positions unless you have clarified this with your current employer. If you are going to set up a hotmail address or something similar, be sure it is an appropriate address and avoid using nicknames as this could give a negative impression to a future employer.

How long should my resume be?

We would recommend that a resume be no longer than 4-5 pages, this is ample space to include all relevant career history and information.

Should I include a cover letter?

Cover letters are only useful if they are specifically tailored to the role. Don't use a generic cover letter as it looks as though you haven't put in any effort. If you are going to use a cover letter, use it to clearly outline your skills and experience that might be of good fit to the role and ensure that it is correctly addressed.



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10 resume tips for lawyers

In every field, having a flawless and professional resume is imperative to getting your foot in the door for an interview, but in the field of law, this is even more true. As a Solicitor, you're expected to possess utter attention to detail and be very savvy about the best way to present yourself.

Here are ten things we've learned about law resumes during our many years placing senior level lawyers in their dream jobs.

1. Keep it short.

If you're a recent graduate or you're new to the field of law, keep your resume to two pages. If you have more experience, it's okay for your CV to be up to 3-5 pages, but make sure it's still concise and to the point.

In certain cases you may have additional material to add to your resume - representative cases or published work, for instance - but more is not always better. Don't clog up your potential employer's inbox with excess materials.

2. Sell yourself, but be honest.

Don't exaggerate or overinflate your experience and skills. Be specific about your experience and back it up with details. Always be ready to defend those details with facts and anecdotes in a face-to-face interview.

3. Customize your resume to include information specific to the job you're applying for.

Every resume you send out should be slightly different. This is particularly true for the short objective that opens your first page. Instead of simply rehashing your skills, make a pointed reference to the job you are applying for, and make your objective about what you can do for them; not just what you are looking for in a job.

For example:

Lawyer with 7 years of volunteer work in civil rights seeks non profit to assist with legal issues.

4. List your educational achievements in reverse chronological order.

Include basic information about the schools you attended, your degrees, thesis topics, and other achievements (see the next point for more).

And remember, most legal departments and law firms will background-check your academic information before hiring you, so it's vital that you are entirely honest - no embellishing the facts of your education.

5. Consider whether to include your law school GPA.

Note that most hiring committees will assume that no GPA is a bad GPA. You can offset this with references to academic achievements and activities. List any professionally relevant extracurricular experiences you engaged in, organization memberships, leadership positions, and awards won.



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10 resume tips for lawyers (continued)

6. If you're newer to the field, include unpaid legal experience.

And if you still need to bulk up your resume with non-legal experience, be sure to visually separate it on your CV. If your resume is on the lean side, and a lot of your job experience is not law-related, you can put a positive spin on your “other” work by saying things like “Financed law school with employment at XYZ while in school full-time.” This helps bulk up your experience while insinuating that you’re a committed hard worker. It also proves that you can hold down a job.

It is important to explain any gaps in time in your resume even if you were not working. “Sabbatical to gain travel experience” or “full-time student” are valid excuses for a six-month gap in your work experience.

7. This is true of all resumes, but particularly true for those in the legal field:

In general, leave off personal information that it would not be legal for a prospective employer to ask you about in an interview. This includes things like marital status, sexual orientation, political affiliations, health, and physical capabilities.

Remember, you can always work this sort of information into an interview if you think it’s important. If there is any chance it will bias the interviewer against you, leave it off.

8. Be unique and interesting, but not overly personal.

Keep it very professional - avoid references to alcohol.

9. Need filler?

Other things to consider including:

- Additional languages spoken
- Publications
- Professional licensing and affiliations

10. Last and far from least, make sure it's perfect.

No typos or grammatical errors. Have several people whose grammar skills you trust implicitly proof your resume; don’t just rely on Microsoft Word’s built-in grammar and spell check tools.

And a little grammar hint: save space (and a headache) by leaving out the pronouns. The reader knows this resume is about you; no need to use words like “I,” “mine,” or “Miss Smith.” Simply state the truncated facts: “5 years of litigation experience.”

Remember, your resume is one of your best marketing materials. It should be honest, compelling, and easy to read. Check your CV against the tips above and you’re already halfway to a great interview.