



The Office of Professional Development: Application Document Style Guide

Letterhead

Creating a Letterhead: Display your name and contact information. Keep it formal: no colors, pictures, or logos. Use this exact letterhead on every document you send to an employer. For example:

FIRST M. LAST

876 Bancroft Street, Apartment #1, Toledo, OH 43606 • (419) 454-9999 • name@gmail.com

Hyperlink: Remove the hyperlink from your email address.

Resumes

GPA and Class Rank: Generally list a GPA if it is above a 3.0 unless the employer explicitly requests it. Generally list class rank if you are in the top 30% of the class.

GPA and Rounding: Round your GPA to two (2) decimal places (hundredths). Use the third decimal place to help you round: if the third decimal place is 0-4, leave the second decimal place the same. If the third decimal place is 5-9, round up the second decimal place. Example: 3.211 becomes 3.21 and 3.567 becomes 3.57.

Degree Name: Your law degree (J.D.) is a *Juris Doctor* not a *Juris Doctorate*. This is a common mistake, so ensure you are using the correct degree name.

Positions/Activities that Have Not Yet Started: Resumes should usually only include things you have done or are in the process of doing. If you have secured a significant activity (Law Review, Moot Court, Trial Advocacy) or prestigious position (federal judicial externship, summer associate position at large firm, etc.) that will start shortly, please contact the OPD for advice on how to list this on your resume as this must be done very carefully and used sparingly.

Joint Degree Programs: If you are pursuing another graduate degree in conjunction with your law degree (called a “joint degree” at Toledo Law), only list the other graduate degree program if you have been accepted to that program and plan to begin that program within a semester. If you have not begun the program, indicate the semester in which you will begin.

Certificates of Concentration: Only list if you have started taking classes towards a Certificate of Concentration. Mention that you are “pursing” a Certificate of Concentration or that one is “in progress.”

Transcripts

Unofficial Transcripts: Request an unofficial transcript from the UT Registrar’s office in Rocket Hall (free) each semester. You can upload a copy of this into Symplicity and scan or photocopy when an employer asks for an unofficial transcript. Copying and pasting your transcript from the Portal to a Microsoft Word document should be done rarely.

References

Reference Lists: References are listed on a document separate from your resume, unless otherwise required by an employer. Use the same letterhead as your other documents and list contact information for 2-3 references unless the employer requests a certain number.

Permission: Always ask for and receive permission before listing anyone as a reference.

Cover Letters

My Name is...: Never start with this phrase. Your name is already in your letterhead and in the closing of your letter.

Formatting: The letterhead contains your information; the address block contains the recipient's name, title, firm or organization, and full address. The full date goes above or below the address block (Ex. September 1, 2015)

Salutation: Use only one of the following – Dear Mr. [Last Name]: / Dear Ms. [Last Name]: / Dear Judge [Last Name]: (Make sure that you use a colon instead of a comma).

I: Minimize the number of times you use the word “I,” especially at the start of sentences or paragraphs.

Formality: Do not use contractions, informal language, or an excessive number of superlatives. Keep a respectful tone and do not oversell yourself. Avoid flattery.

Firm Name: Use the full firm name, not the shorter, marketing name (Shumaker, Loop & Kendrick, LLP vs. Shumaker). Double check the punctuation, spelling, and use/non-use of ampersands in the firm's name. Be careful not to overuse the name of the firm.

Email Signature Lines and Business Cards

Misrepresentation: Do not misrepresent your student status. If you list your degree program, clearly state your expected graduation date.

Activities/Leadership Positions: Generally, do not list these unless they are relevant to the person to whom you are writing. (Example: If you email a Law Review author with notes, it is OK to list that you are an Associate Editor for *The University of Toledo Law Review*.) On business cards, it is a good idea to only list your name, school, law degree and expected graduation date, and your contact information.

Quotes: Do not list quotes even if they are related to the law.

Writing Samples

Length: Generally, your sample should be 7-10 pages or a 7-10 page excerpt of a longer document unless a page limit/page range is specified by an employer.

Cover Page: Every writing sample MUST have a cover page. A cover page contains your letterhead, title of “Writing Sample,” and short paragraph that contains the following information:

1. What your writing sample is (note if it is an excerpt of a longer document)
2. When it was written
3. What it was written for
4. A brief summary of the topic (1-2 sentences)
5. Note if you received an A or A- grade if it was written for a class

IMPORTANT: If you are using a writing sample from work with an employer, ask your employer for permission before using this as a writing sample. Also, take steps to protect the identity of the parties and any confidential information. It is a good practice to note that the writing sample is being used with the permission of your employer.