



Writing Sample Tip Sheet

Employers ask for writing samples to quickly evaluate your attention to detail, the quality of your legal analysis, and the persuasiveness of your writing style. You want to provide a work product that clearly demonstrates your ability to write and research independently without extensive oversight. Here are a few tips to select and edit the best sample:

- **Tailor the type of writing to your employer.** Consider what type of writing you will be expected to do and submit that type. If you are applying to a district attorney's office, you will probably not write objective memos. Instead, you want to submit a trial brief or a summary of facts. Likewise, if you are applying to a work with a judge, you do want to submit an objective writing sample.
- **Include a cover page with a short explanation.** You want to place your writing in context. You should include a paragraph that explains what the purpose of the writing was, who the audience was, how extensively others edited it, and that you have permission to distribute it.
- **Edit your writing sample periodically.** You should edit your writing sample with fresh eyes before sending it out to employers. Don't forget to edit it again every few months. Your writing will improve during the course of law school, and an outdated writing sample will not reflect your progress.
- **Make sure that every sentence serves a purpose (CRAC).** Employers are *always* looking for clarity and brevity. If your first page is twice as long as it needed to be, a potential employer will probably not read any further.
- **Use sophisticated citations.** Employers are also using your writing sample to check your ability to research thoroughly. Double check that your case citations are correct, add new citations as they become relevant, and use explanatory parentheticals where necessary.
- **Get permission and redact as necessary.** You must get permission from your employer or supervisor to use any work product. Be sure to redact names and identifying facts as necessary to protect your clients and employer.
- **Ask a friend to read it.** You should have as many eyes looking at a writing sample as possible. It is important to receive feedback on line edits, but just as important to have someone read your sample quickly and holistically for general impressions.