

/ Writing Sample Advice

Some employers may request a writing sample in the initial application process but most will not. Do not submit one unless specifically asked. Your writing sample should be the best **legal** writing you have done. As a rule, 5-10 pages will be of sufficient length.

Legal employers typically seek legal analysis in writing samples; therefore, a memorandum or brief is preferred over a research paper. It can be a memo from a summer job, the writing competition note you submitted for the journals, a portion of a moot court brief, or part of a memorandum or brief that you wrote for class. If you use something created for a past internship/job, be sure to ask permission from the employer and be sure to edit as needed to preserve confidentiality.

In addition, less outside editing is better, which is why previously published pieces are not automatically at the top of the list. This does not mean that you should not edit! If you received comments from a professor or an employer on the final draft of the writing you are using, be sure to incorporate that feedback. Most students' legal writing will improve over the course of law school so you should generally select a recent piece of work.

The topic of the writing sample does not necessarily need to relate to the employer's work but if you do have a quality sample that does, you may wish to use it.

A cover sheet is useful to give any necessary background information about your writing sample. You should be sure to make clear why and when you wrote the sample - e.g., for a seminar in a particular course, as part of a memorandum for an employer, for a particular journal. (If you redraft an earlier effort, you should describe the sample as "based on a memo I wrote in our first year writing program".)

1Ls: It is unlikely that you'll have a graded legal writing sample by the time you're applying for interviews at CCF and so it will be VERY rare for an employer to request this in the initial applications. If they do request a writing sample, use the best non-legal sample that you have available that demonstrates your research and persuasive writing skills and explain in your cover sheet that you're happy to provide an alternative later in the application process when you're deeper into the semester.

PROOFREADING CHECKLIST

- Be consistent in your use of format, punctuation, font, font size, and color.
- Avoid using acronyms unless you spell out the acronym prior.
- Read your writing sample slowly from the beginning to check for spelling and grammatical errors. Run a spell check on your computer and repeat this step.
- Read aloud while you proofread. Have a friend or family member proofread your resume.