

# How to Create a Legal Resume

ST. MARY'S UNIVERSITY



SCHOOL OF LAW

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**HOW TO CREATE A LEGAL RESUME**  
**Faye Bracey, Assistant Dean of Career Services**  
**St. Mary's University School of Law**  
[http://www.stmarytx.edu/law/career\\_services/](http://www.stmarytx.edu/law/career_services/)  
**210-436-3511**

1) **The Look**

- a) Paper color-white, ivory, buff, cream
- b) Font color-black, maybe blue for e-mail
- c) Generally, font size should not be less than 10
- d) Font type-use a simple font like Arial or Times New Roman. May use bold.
- e) **Use italics infrequently as they may not scan well.** Generally only use italics for Latin terms (i.e., *cum laude*) or for publications (i.e., *The Scholar*). For italics use Arial or Optima font. Change font size to fit in with other font you've used. For example, Arial 10.5 or 11 appears about the same size as Times New Roman 12.
- f) Try to keep to 1 page, especially if you are a 1L or entering Evening student; 2 pages are better than 1 crowded page; NEVER EXCEED 2 PAGES!
- g) Put no page number on page 2; include header with your name only, justified left
- h) Don't put an objective; don't put References Available Upon Request
- i) **Generally use no abbreviations, including GPA, JD, TX or Apt.**
- j) Have someone proofread for typos and grammatical errors
- k) Do not put it in a binder or plastic cover

2) **The Format and Content**—Very Conservative, Very Formulaic—little room for creativity—know that you will not necessarily have all the headings on your resume as on the sample resume.

- a) ALWAYS BE TRUTHFUL!!
- b) Contact information—see sample headings to personalize your resume. Don't abbreviate your name (A.J. Smith); put nickname in quotes if it will be used professionally, i.e., Hector Juan "H.J." Garcia; Alexander "Al" Smith; Lishan "Lee" Wang; spell out address, no Ave. or St.; put city, state, zip code, phone numbers (including area code). Make sure you have an answering machine and appropriate message. Put e-mail address and check daily
- c) Looking for a job outside of San Antonio? List permanent address, if it gives you a geographic link, flush right, current flush left. If in transition, put "until June 1, 2008" and "after June 1, 2008". After the end date, change resume to put only one address.

d) **EDUCATION**

- i) List in reverse chronological order, school, full legal name (the full name of UT is **The University of Texas at Austin**), city and state
- ii) On the next line, put the culmination of the time there, which is usually the degree received. Don't abbreviate, put Juris Doctor or Juris Doctorate, Bachelor of Science, add sole major (if any), date received (may be just year or month and year)
  - (1) If major and minor, list both with colons.
  - (2) If candidate for degree, list as Candidate for Juris Doctor, comma, year expected to receive. For example, Candidate for Juris Doctor, 2009
  - (3) If you have a thesis—put it. It's evidence of writing ability
  - (4) If the culmination of the time at a school did not result in a degree, put what you did accomplish there. For example:
    - 1. **San Antonio Community College**, San Antonio, Texas  
Completed 30 general education credit hours, 2003
    - 2. Grade point average or rank
      - a. Almost always put law school rank only if it is in the Top 50% and list it as Top x%. Definitely put grade point average if it is 3.0 or above, optionally put it if it is below 3.0.
      - b. For other schools, do not have to list unless it is 3.0 or above
    - 3. List Alternative Dispute Resolution training, if any
    - 4. Honors and Activities—**List only ones that are academic in nature in the Education section and put them under the relevant school.** Put scholarships, dean's list, academic recognition, i.e.,

*summa cum laude*, **Moot Court (it is not required at all schools so you want to signal that you have had an oral advocacy experience)**. You optionally may list years or semester of honors/activities but if you do it for dean's list it may raise the question of why you didn't receive it in the other years.  
**Organization memberships should not be listed here but under ORGANIZATIONS AND MEMBERSHIPS**

- e) **EXPERIENCE (this should not be entitled Employment because some volunteer and internship experiences build skills to bring to the next employer, too)**
- i) List in reverse chronological order. Employer, city, state, time period (can be just years). If the employment is current put "start date hyphen present" or put "start date to present".
  - ii) The job title always appears on its own separate line
    - (a) You must describe what you did in an experience so the next employer knows what skills you have already used. There are two correct ways to list duties: 1. Short sentence fragments, separated by semi-colons, ending with period and each fragment starts with a verb, only the first verb is capitalized or 2. List with bullets, no periods, each bullet starts with a capitalized verb.
  - iii) Keep relatively short descriptions. Try to quantify non-legal jobs.
    - (a) For example, "Supervised 14 sub-contractors; reconciled weekly average revenue intake of \$12,000.
  - iv) Start fragments or bullets with verbs- present tense for present jobs; past tense for past jobs.
  - v) Military experience-if it's lengthy, condense with phrases such as "Granted multiple awards", "Awarded several promotions in rank" rather than listing them all. Military experience can be a touchy subject.
  - vi) How far do you go back? Depends on what you have—lots of legal experience, list that, not much beyond; otherwise as far back to show leadership skills applicable to being a lawyer i.e., business owner-yes; waitress-no. Can have phrase at end: "**Various part-time store clerk and auto mechanic positions**, Evanston, Illinois 1986-1990"
  - vii) Do not list whether the experience was volunteer, paid or for internship credit.
  - viii) What skills do legal employers want to see from non-legal jobs?
    - (a) Leadership skills, such as supervising employees or leading a team
    - (b) Research and writing skills, such as writing job manuals, training aids
    - (c) Oral communication skills, such as making presentations
    - (d) Conflict resolution and public relation skills, such as working with diverse communities and appeasing unhappy customers
    - (e) Handling money because many jobs include settlement accounts, trusts and estates, etc.
  - ix) Do not put "Responsible for...", "Administered...", "Managed all..." These are too vague and do not showcase the specific skills used. So, instead of saying "Responsible for all manufacturing plant employees", you should list, "Recruited, interviewed, hired, evaluated, promoted and disciplined approximately 60 manufacturing plant employees."
- f) **ORGANIZATIONS, MEMBERSHIPS AND PROFESSIONAL CERTIFICATIONS**
- i) List anything legal and anything in which you have a member or officer role. If you are not an officer but were responsible for a major task put that
  - ii) Looking in another geographic market? Look at joining their bar as a student member.
  - iii) List anything from college that's academic in nature, anything that demonstrates leadership, writing experience, fundraising, management; put social fraternity or sorority; may put years.
  - iv) Consider leaving off religious or political affiliations.
  - v) Add if a certification/license you hold is relevant to the type of law for which you are applying, i.e., plumbing license, no; K-12 superintendent license for education law job, yes.
- g) **LANGUAGES AND COMPUTER SKILLS**

- i) Add language only if you are fluent.
  - ii) Do not list standard legal research (Lexis-Nexis, Westlaw), word processing, spreadsheet, database as computer skills. Do put if you have any familiarity with unique software pertinent to area of law practice (IRS job-tax prep software; medical software for medical malpractice firm).
- h) **COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES (not optional—many firms, all public interest and government employers want to see this) AND SKILLS AND INTERESTS (required for Texas employers)**
- i) List community connections. Do not list volunteer work you did in high school.
  - ii) Looking for community activities that require a minimum of time or money? See Sister Grace for ideas. Also, the Center for Legal & Social Justice (St. Mary's clinic) accepts donations of cans of non-perishable food for their food bank and toiletries (even the hotel ones), granola bars and snacks, clothing, socks, baseball caps, and bug spray for the homeless.
  - iii) See separate handout regarding Skills and Interests. This section is critical so don't omit it.
- i) **REFERENCES**
- i) Don't list references on your resume unless specified by employer and then put as the last heading. Otherwise, use a separate sheet, which matches your resume paper. Don't staple your reference sheet to your resume. Try to use legal references—professors, supervisors at legal jobs. After that, use supervisors at non-legal jobs. Avoid family, co-workers, friends, religious leaders. Optionally list their relationship to you and years (lots of folks have changed jobs and it's not now obvious why they are a reference). Ask the references what contact information they want you to list. **ALWAYS MAKE SURE THE INFORMATION IS CURRENT FOR YOUR REFERENCES!** Don't submit your references to an employer unless they specifically request it. Do not submit letters of recommendation. Legal employers generally want to talk to your references.
  - ii) Provide a copy of your resume to your reference and send a thank you note for serving as your reference.
  - iii) If possible, alert your reference if you have specific reason to believe that he or she will be contacted and give the reference a copy of the job description. Doing so helps him or her tailor their answers if contacted.

3) **FINAL REMINDERS**

- a) Your resume is not a static document. You need to tailor and update it.
- b) Target your resume to the specific employer.
- c) Always update your resume right away. Memories fade.

Revised 12/09/09

**ST. MARY'S UNIVERSITY  
SCHOOL OF LAW  
CAREER SERVICES OFFICE  
Faye Bracey, Assistant Dean  
SKILLS AND INTERESTS SECTION  
ON A RESUME**

Employers have told me that they want to see a SKILLS AND INTERESTS section on your resume to see if you are well-rounded, to see if the information sparks any interesting interview questions for them, to see if any of the items have rainmaking potential and to see if you have a connection with the interviewer and would fit into their employment. You also want to make yourself memorable in this section. To achieve these objectives, consider the following:

1. Do I have any interests or skills which are unique, which the common person doesn't have? I have seen deep-sea fishing (on a woman's resume), constructing furniture (again on a woman's resume), ice fishing, paragliding, breeding show dogs, snorkeling. All are things that many of us don't do. This is the type of thing that will stick in an interviewer's mind after she or he has met 20 students all in a row.

2. Do I have any collections that are interesting but not weird? Collecting rare Greek coins is interesting. Collecting rubber bands for the giant rubber band ball is weird. Don't discount your collection and assume no one would be interested. For example, a student reluctantly told me that she collects Belleek china (a fine Irish china). Interestingly enough, I have some pieces as well and we discussed patterns. She had made a connection with me. Then I gave her resume to a male interviewer during Mock Interviews last spring. Beforehand, he said to me, "I'm interested in meeting this woman to find out what in the heck is Belleek china." She had piqued his interest. Don't assume that no one collects the same things you do or that no one would be interested.

3. If my interests or skills are commonplace, can I put a better definition on them to reflect more about me? For example, many students say to me that they like to read. Well, what are you reading? You are not just reading the back of the cereal box. If you put down "reading" as one of your skills or interests, it will either be so bland that the interviewer will not say anything about it or the first question they will ask is, "what do you like to read?" So help them (and yourself) out ahead of time. Think about reading either in terms of authors you like (reading Tom Clancy novels) or in terms of types of books (reading historical fiction, reading mysteries). If you are reading Harlequin Romances, don't put those.

Many students also like to travel. List it either in terms of countries or regions (one woman student listed "traveling to West Africa and China"—she's bound to get questions about that) or by something you generally like to do when you travel ("traveling to Europe to visit art museums, traveling international to snorkel, camping in national parks, traveling to view civil war monuments) If you are traveling just to visit family and friends, don't put that. Also don't put "traveling to hang out at beaches and watch the girls/guys."

Some students like to write. If you are just writing a journal or diary, don't put that. Put "writing poetry", "writing technical articles for science magazines," "writing children's books".

Cooking is another interest of many students. Either identify a type of cuisine "cooking North African and Irish foods" or a specific specialty "cooking Bacalarios Skordalia" (Greek cod in garlic sauce).

4. What am I doing in sports? Some students list just the name of the sport, "basketball, soccer and swimming". Think about your actual involvement in those sports. Use action verbs: "coaching basketball, refereeing soccer, swimming relays competitively". Also, remember that employers are looking for well rounded students. Try not to put just athletic interests: "playing soccer, following Notre Dame football and refereeing at tennis tournaments".

5. These are what I call "the 4 firm social skills". If you have any interest or skill in golf, tennis or racquetball, put them down. Many partners play these games or some firms host tournaments. By listing them, you show that you have an understanding of and appreciation for the sport although you can always explain in an interview or on the job that you don't feel your skills are good enough to participate as a player. You can always offer to coordinate the registrations, run the beverage cart around the golf course, etc. It shows you would fit in. The last firm social skill is running. Lots of folks are runners now and you

need to build that connection; however, list your level of proficiency: recreational runner, competitive runner, 5K runner, marathon runner. Also, there are some people who are not runners per se but they participate in every fill-in-the-blank fundraising walkathon/runathon. Say, for example, that you have a brother with Muscular Dystrophy; consequently, you run in every Muscular Dystrophy fundraising race. Put that on your resume: "run in Muscular Dystrophy fundraising races". It will catch the interviewer's interest and make them ask you why you choose that particular cause.

6. There are some things to stay away from. I would never ask a student to deny who he or she is but there are some items that, if on a resume, are controversial and may end up costing you a precious limited interview slot and, therefore, you never get a chance to demonstrate your legal skills. The market is very tight right now and judgments are subjective so think carefully before listing these or omit them entirely:

- Anything religious
- Anything political
- Anything to do with bullfighting or hunting (PETA's new campaign is regarding fishing)
- Anything to do with the fur industry (i.e., raising minks)

Sometimes exceptions can be made but always check with me beforehand if you have any question.

**Please know that St. Mary's University does not discriminate based on protected class basis and does not condone such. If you feel you have been discriminated against in the job search process, please immediately inform me.**

Don't worry if you haven't done some of these things recently. Employers know that students generally only breathe, sleep and eat the law while in law school. But they do want to know that you will return to the land of the living when law school is over. What did you like to do before and what would you like to return to doing afterwards.

You need to list no less than 3 and no more than 7 items in this section. Struggling with what to put down? Ask your friends and family what they would say are your hobbies and interests. Look around your home. Do you have any collections? Maybe you didn't really think that you collected cookbooks but you are sitting and looking at the 50 you have on your bookshelves. Sounds like a collection to me.

If all else fails, come and talk with me. Together we will discover what makes you uniquely you.

# SAMPLE RESUME HEADINGS

## JANE S. DOE

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Permanent Address  
123 Main Street  
Austin, Texas 78746

[jdoe@mail.stmarytx.edu](mailto:jdoe@mail.stmarytx.edu)  
(210) 555-5555

Current Address  
456 E. Somewhere Avenue  
San Antonio, Texas 78228

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## John Smith

[jsmith1234@mail.stmarytx.edu](mailto:jsmith1234@mail.stmarytx.edu)  
(210) 555-5555

9876 Somewhere Avenue  
San Antonio, Texas 78228

1234 Main Street  
Houston, Texas 77057

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1234 MAIN STREET | SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS 78228  
PHONE 210.555.5555 | EMAIL JQPUBLIC@MAIL.STMARYTX.EDU

## JOHN Q. PUBLIC

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### FRANCIS T. LAWSTUDENT

1234 Main Street, San Antonio, Texas 78228

Home (210) 555-5555 • Mobile (210) 555-5555 • [ftlawstudent@mail.stmarytx.edu](mailto:ftlawstudent@mail.stmarytx.edu)

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## Francis “Frank” Lawstudent

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1234 Main Street, # 1601  
San Antonio, Texas 78228

Mobile: (210) 555-5555  
Email:[ftlawstudent@mail.stmarytx.edu](mailto:ftlawstudent@mail.stmarytx.edu)

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## Jane Someone Doe

123 Main Street, San Antonio, Texas 78228 • (210) 555-5555 • [jdoe@email.com](mailto:jdoe@email.com)

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## JOHN SMITH

[jsmith1234@mail.stmarytx.edu](mailto:jsmith1234@mail.stmarytx.edu)

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ONE CAMINO SANTA MARIA  
SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS 78228  
210.555.5555

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1234 Main Street  
San Antonio, Texas 78228  
(210) 555-5555  
[jpublic@mail.stmarytx.edu](mailto:jpublic@mail.stmarytx.edu)

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## John Q. Public

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♦ **LUDMILLA “MILLIE” COLLINS** ♦

♦ **123 Broadway Avenue ♦ San Antonio, Texas 78228 ♦ (210) 963-6161 ♦ [Collins@ls.stmarytx.edu](mailto:Collins@ls.stmarytx.edu)** ♦

**EDUCATION**

**St. Mary’s University School of Law**, San Antonio, Texas

Candidate for Juris Doctor, 2009

Rank: Top 14%; Grade Point Average: 3.09

- ♦ *St. Mary’s Law Journal*, Staff Writer, 2009-2010
- ♦ Linda and David Schlueter First Year Moot Court Competition, Octa-finalist and Best Speaker 3 out of 4 rounds
- ♦ St. Mary’s Institute on World Legal Problems at the University of Innsbruck, Innsbruck, Austria, Summer, 2009
- ♦ Distinguished Visiting Jurist: United States Supreme Court Justice Samuel Alito, Jr.

**Oklahoma State University**, Stillwater, Oklahoma

Master of Business Administration, Accounting, *cum laude*, 2004

- ♦ Thesis: “Ethics in Accounting: Reviving a Dead Concept”

**Northwestern University**, Evanston, Illinois

Bachelor of Science, Major: Economics; Minor: Accounting, 2000

- ♦ John Jones Scholarship, Recipient

**EXPERIENCE**

**St. Mary’s University Center for Legal & Social Justice** San Antonio, Texas August 2009-Present

Student Attorney

Interview and represent clients in civil matters; prepare cases for trial; schedule and attend hearings on behalf of clients as the attorney of record; arrange and conduct depositions; draft letters and motions; file motions with the court; perform discovery; investigate claims and follow up on service of process and responses filed with the court by opposing party; and negotiate with opposing counsel; meet regularly with Supervising Attorney on each case to discuss strategy and update regarding new developments

**Kaplan PMBR** San Antonio, Texas August- December 2009

Sales Representative

Present Kaplan PMBR as the premier producer of law school study aids and bar preparation materials; sell Kaplan study aids to current law students at St. Mary’s University School of Law to assist them in their law school career and help them prepare themselves for the bar exam

**De Mott, Mouton and Van Ausdahl, P.C.** Austin, Texas Summer 2009

Legal Intern

Drafted motions; researched deportation issues; wrote memoranda regarding the applicability of the PATRIOT Act; updated immigration petitions

**Law Offices of Michael Collins** San Antonio, Texas August 2007- June 2008

Law Clerk

- ♦ Filed documents in federal court
- ♦ Maintained library resources
- ♦ Researched family law and criminal law issues

*(Note: this is an alternative way of listing job responsibilities. Use only one way for all jobs.)*

**ORGANIZATIONS, MEMBERSHIPS AND PROFESSIONAL CERTIFICATIONS**

- ♦ San Antonio Bar Association, student member responsible for food drive at St. Mary’s School of Law
- ♦ Oklahoma Certified Public Accountants Association, Treasurer 2009 ♦ Certified Public Accountant
- ♦ Women’s Law Association ♦ Phi Delta Phi International legal Fraternity

**LANGUAGES AND COMPUTER SKILLS**

- ♦ Fluent in Spanish ♦ Proficient in several accounting programs ♦ Experienced with ProDoc ♦

**COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES AND INTERESTS**

♦ San Antonio Bar Association Community Justice Program’s Wills Clinic volunteer ♦ Catholic Charities, Ask-A-Lawyer Volunteer ♦ Talking Tapes for the Blind, Volunteer Reader ♦ Teach self-defense courses ♦ Train and show German Shepherds ♦ Run in Breast Cancer Awareness fund-raising races ♦ Cook Thai food ♦

♦ LUDMILLA “MILLIE” COLLINS ♦  
♦ 123 Broadway Avenue ♦ San Antonio, Texas 78228 ♦ (210) 963-6161 ♦  
[Collins@ls.stmarytx.edu](mailto:Collins@ls.stmarytx.edu) ♦

## EMPLOYMENT REFERENCES

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Vivian Mouton  
DeMott, Mouton and Van Ausdahl, P.C.  
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7800 Beta Street  
Austin, Texas 75043  
Work: (319) 889-0785  
Home: (319) 481-4557  
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