

How to Choose a Legal Writing Sample

Consider the following points when choosing any legal writing sample, whether it's for a summer internship or a job after graduation.

1. Select a sample that reflects your own work.

- Ideally, choose a piece of writing that only you outlined, researched, drafted, and edited. It's ok to get feedback from someone else, as long as you decide whether and how to incorporate that feedback into the final product.
- If you collaborated with someone else *and* there is a discreet section that only you outlined, researched, drafted, and edited, use that discreet section.
- If you have a final product that was written by you, but has been lightly edited by someone else, you have two options. Either go back to the unedited draft and edit it yourself, or disclose in your cover letter that the final sample was lightly edited by someone else.
- It is *never* appropriate to use a writing sample that was written by someone else, even if you change or summarize their wording.

2. Share your best legal writing.

- Most of the time, you should choose a sample that reflects your best legal analysis. If the internship or job is more policy or academic oriented, then you may decide to choose a sample less focused on legal analysis.
- Aim to develop one good writing sample during each academic year and/or summer internship. Examples could include: moot court brief; upper year seminar paper or research project; memo, letter, administrative comments, or advocacy piece from an internship or externship; clinic work sample; or journal note.
- Remember that your sample should (usually!) be only 5-10 pages. If your piece of writing is longer than that, choose an excerpt to share; ideally one discreet section. Note clerkship writing samples may be longer depending on the court.
- If it's not yet your best legal writing, don't worry! Work to make it better.

3. Consider your audience.

- If possible, you should choose a sample that your reader will find interesting and relevant. For example, if you're applying to an environmental organization, a piece of writing that deals with environmental law would be best.

- However, the *most* important thing is to choose a sample that is your own work and reflects your best legal writing. If you have to choose between your best writing and the most relevant writing, go with your best writing.
- Especially for your 1L summer, it's ok if you don't have a writing sample specific to the area of law your reader will find most relevant. Just choose your best legal writing.

Final Note: If your sample is from a prior job or internship, make sure to ask your employer's permission and redact any confidential information before sharing.