

Writing Sample Guide

Most legal employers will ask for a writing sample as part of your application materials. They usually prefer "working documents" like memos and briefs rather than academic pieces like scholarly essays or law journal articles. Here are six tips for submitting a writing sample:

- 1. Your first-year Legal Methods memo or brief is usually a good base for a writing sample. As you complete legal internships and co-op placements, try to use workplace memos and briefs from those experiences as writing samples.
 - 2. Always get your employer's permission first.
- 3. Redact confidential and identifying information. It's easier and more professional to read if you simply change to fictitious names, rather than blacking out identifying information.
- 4. Writing samples should be no longer than ten pages (some employers will ask for only five pages). You should take the time to adjust your memo or brief to conform to the page limit. Take out one section of an analysis or take out the facts and provide a factual summary instead. Employers are looking for your best example of legal analysis applying the law to the facts to come to a conclusion.
- 5. You should annotate your writing sample so the employer knows what it is, what you took out, and that you have permission to use it. For example, use a cover page that says something like this:

This is the memo I wrote for my first-year Legal Methods class. The memo involved three issues: whether a father who mistakenly left his infant son in the car all day causing his son's death should be charged with involuntary manslaughter or endangering the welfare of a child, and whether photographs taken of the deceased infant are admissible at trial. For writing sample purposes, I am including only the analysis on involuntary manslaughter.

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This is a portion of a memo that I drafted during my internship with Dutchess & Snow. This analysis focuses on whether the State of New Jersey is immune from suit under the New Jersey Tort Claims Act for a drowning allegedly caused by the State's coastline dredging operations. I have my employer's permission to use this analysis as a writing sample, and I have redacted all confidential and identifying information.

6. Put a header on each page: Rick Blaine, Writing Sample, Page X.