

Writing Sample



TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY

School of Law

Office of
Career Services



What is the purpose of a writing sample?

- The purpose of a writing sample is to illustrate how you organize and express your thoughts in writing.
- Legal employers use the writing sample to determine whether your skills and abilities meet their standards.
- Your writing sample should demonstrate your legal reasoning and analytical skills as well as your ability to communicate succinctly.



When should I submit a writing sample?

You **should only** submit a writing sample when an employer specifically requests it.

You **should not** send a writing sample when sending networking letters.



What is the proper format?

Page length: 5 to 10 pages, double-spaced.

If an employer sets a minimum or maximum page limit, you should adhere to those specifications. The writing sample, including the cover page, should fit into the employer's given page limit.

You should also include a header or footer with your name and page number on every page.

Note: It is important to note that there are some exceptions when applying for judicial clerkships. See your CSO for more information.



How do I condense my writing sample?

If your sample exceeds the page requirements, you can select an excerpt from the sample as long as you provide an explanation in the cover page of the context of the excerpt, including facts and issues that will provide the reader with a complete understanding of the work product. You should also ensure that the selected excerpt demonstrates your analytical and legal reasoning skills and ability to communicate clearly and concisely.



What type of writing sample should I submit?

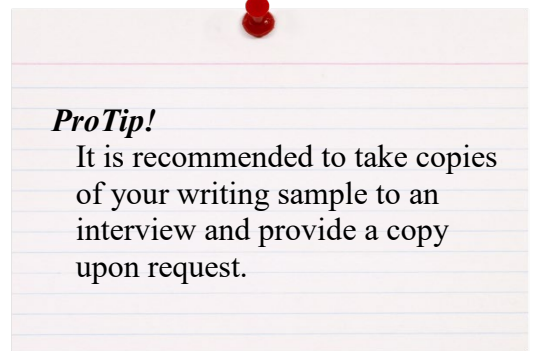
Acceptable writing samples include:

Assignments from your law school writing classes: LARW I-III; rigorous writing course; or drafting classes.

Legal documents from your internships, externships, and clinical placements with prior permission received & redactions

Drafts of law review articles and briefs from advocacy teams.

Note: Generally, one should avoid submitting final law review articles and scholarly writings, given the rigorous editing process.



ProTip!
It is recommended to take copies of your writing sample to an interview and provide a copy upon request.

When possible, your writing sample should cater to the type of practice of the prospective employer. For example:

Example 1: Some employers prefer a persuasive writing sample that will allow them to evaluate your written advocacy skills while others will accept a predictive, analytical writing piece such as a bench memorandum for a judge.

However, the ultimate criterion should be the quality of the writing. You should also avoid subject matter that may distract the employer from the merits of the writing and leave a negative impression.

How much can I edit?

A writing sample must be your own work product. If you select a writing sample that is the result of a collaborative effort, you must excerpt or identify the sections that you wrote.

Work product: do I need to obtain permission or redact confidential information?

If you are using a real-world writing sample from an internship, externship or clinical experience, you should obtain permission to use it.

You should also redact **confidential** or **sensitive** information that would reveal the identity of the clients or attorneys, even if that information is in a public record.

Example 2: You can use general titles such as Plaintiff/Defendant or Lessee/Lessor. If you are using a law school writing sample, you should remove silly or funny names of parties designed to add levity to the writing process.

Should I include a cover page?

It is recommended that you prepare a cover page for each writing sample. Your cover page should be brief (do not exceed one page) and follow the same format of your cover letter with your name and contact information at the top of the page.

The purpose of the cover page is to provide context and information on why and when the sample was created (class assignment, internship, etc.). The cover page should also include information on edits, redactions and, if excerpted, provide an explanation of what sections are being submitted and omitted.

See next page for sample.

SAMPLE WRITING SAMPLE – DO NOT COPY. USE AS A GUIDE ONLY.

Date

Individual's Name
Title
Firm/Organization Name
3516 Elm Street
Fort Worth, TX 76110

Match your
resume heading

Law Student Name
1234 Main Street
Fort Worth, TX 76111

Writing Sample Cover Page

Dear Mr./Ms.:

This writing sample was produced in Legal Analysis, Research, and Writing II during the Spring 2023 semester. The assignment was to draft an “email memo” that would more closely replicate what would be produced during the day-to-day operations of a law office. The tone of the memo was intended to be less formal than a traditional memo while also being shorter and more direct.

The assigned problem focused on the enforceability of a contract’s liquidated-damages clause. This writing assignment was the first in which I was required to locate cases, statutes, and secondary sources on my own. This email memo reflects my own analysis of the applicable case law and statutes. I utilized a variety of print and online resources to gain a complete understanding of the scenario.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I look forward to discussing the opportunity to serve with the Federal Public Defender’s Office in the future.

Respectfully submitted,

Law Student Name
Enclosure: Writing Sample

DON'T FORGET TO PROOFREAD
Your writing sample should be free of spelling, grammatical, and typographical errors. You should proofread it several times and double-check the citation formats.

ProTip!
Ask friends, colleagues, and law school writing professors to review it to ensure that it is substantively sound.