

Where to Place Your Law School in Your Resume

If you are in law school, just graduated, or have been out of law school for less than three years, your legal education information should be at the top. After three years, it needs to go on the bottom. And the longer you are out of law school, the shorter your legal education section should become. If for some reason in the three plus years you have been out of law school, you have not accumulated a lot of real legal experience to outshine your educational background, you may consider keeping your education section at the top for a couple more years; but it would be more prudent, of course, to consider garnering more legal experience to strengthen the overall effect of your resume. After you've been out of law school for ten years, no one is going to care about what you did in college.

It's important for law students and recent graduates to place their educational experience at the top because recruiters and employers are going to want to know where you are coming from and what you know. If you are still in law school or just received your JD, they are going to want to know that up front and, accordingly, what you can contribute. In most cases, obviously, law students and recent graduates don't have a lot of significant legal experience yet, and their legal education is their trump card.

Just be mindful of what specifications the firms or companies are looking for when you apply. If there is one skill you gained, specific course you took, certificates gained, legal fraternities joined, or mock trials you participated in during law school that is relevant to your search, definitely add that to your education section. CLE courses are a big plus if you lack real legal experience.

Tips**Resume Length**

If you are a recent law graduate, your resume should not exceed one page. Period. You might consider two pages if you did a dozen legal internships and summers throughout school at a broad range of employment venues and did a vast array of research, drafting, and court-attending other than filing, answering phones, and buying birthday gifts at Barnes and Noble. Even if this is true, you should then consider editing your resume per search and only include relevant duties done. Besides that, even seasoned attorneys with more than 20 years of practice should consider one-page resumes, since the hiring world is more demanding and fast-paced these days. Of course, every recruiter and employer is different personality-wise and works under different professional and personal conditions from day to day, but if he or she has a stack of resumes to skim in a short period of time, your one-page resume will more than likely be better appreciated.

What to Include in Your Legal Education Section

- Universities, community colleges, and trade schools
- Cities and States of each school
- Date of graduation— actual or anticipated. Writing both the month and the year is preferred, but year alone is acceptable (just consider consistency regarding how you approach dating your work experience and other details throughout the resume)
- Degree(s) earned—majors are a must; minors can be included if relevant or spacing permits (if you graduated *cum laude*, place that between the degree and date). Degrees can be spelled out or abbreviated (but be consistent).
- GPA
- Honors programs and awards
- Certificates earned
- University papers or journals: participation and/or publication
- Organizations
- Fraternities or sororities
- Related coursework or senior projects
- Special training, workshops, and seminars

Example:

University of Southern California, Los Angeles, CA

Juris Doctor, May 2007

- GPA: 3.7
- Dean's List, Spring 2005; Fall 2006
- Member: Humanities Honors Society, Spring 2004-Spring 2007
- Participant: Literary Debate League, Fall 2004

Dates

List the months and the years; days are not necessary. Writing "Jun. 2007-Dec. 2007" is specific, concise, honest, and won't raise any red flags to an employer. Writing "2007-2007" looks strange and doesn't really mean anything. If you worked at one job from "2006-2007" and the current one from "2007-Present," you can get away with that, but keep in mind that the persnickety employer will wonder if you quit your last job in January of 2007, went to the Bahamas for two seasons, and started your new job in September.

GPA

The GPA should come first in a list of achievements under the school information.

- Only list your GPA if you are a student or recent graduate. The longer you have been out of school and accumulating work experience, the more you should be offering up space from your Education section to your Experience section. *Same applies with all other honorable mentions under your list of schools.*
- Only list your GPA if it's 3.0 or higher.
- Only list your GPA if it's going to be obvious to the employer—if your school did not use the standard scale, consider carefully how you will present it otherwise.
- If your GPA is not high enough and the employer requests it, you'll have to bite the proverbial bullet and spit it on there. Not doing so, of course, will have worse consequences like indicating to the employer that you are hiding something or don't pay attention to directions.

Academic Honors

Again, definitely include this information if you are a law student or recent graduate. List awards or honors programs in bullets underneath the school information. Mention "cum laude" honors after your degree/major.

Abandoned Program

Only mention that you started a program at certain school if the study is applicable to your current chosen career. For example, if you started studying medicine and decided to earn a JD and want to put that in your resume, then you would write the school, city, and dates on one line and a bullet underneath with mention of your studies (i.e.—"Studies included General Medicine and Health Law").

Community Colleges and High Schools

Only mention community colleges if:

- You are still in law school or are a recent graduate and you earned an AA in something relevant to your legal search (and you are trying desperately to accommodate for blank space!)

Only mention your high school if:

- You are 100% certain that the person to whom you are sending your resume will be absolutely thrilled to discover that you were once a student there.