SYRACUSE UNIVERSITY COLLEGE OF LAW

Resume Guide

College of Law

A practical framework for building and updating your legal resume.

Dineen Hall, Suite 214 · 315.443.1941 · lawcareer@syr.edu

This guide is a starting point, not a rulebook. Use it as a general framework, then work with a Career Services coach to tailor the content to your strengths and to each employer. The skills and experiences you highlight for a law firm may differ from what you emphasize for a government or public interest employer, so tailor your resume to each opportunity.

PART 01

Getting started

The fundamentals are simple, and they matter more than any clever formatting:

- Use a clean, readable typeface and a consistent layout.
- Keep it neat and error-free. Every detail must be accurate — employers drop candidates for misstated GPA, class rank, or dates.
- Hold it to **one page**. Two pages is acceptable only for second-career students, or public-interest and government tracks with substantial prior experience.
- Print on quality, neutral-colored bond paper.

PART 02

What goes on the resume

A law school resume follows a standard order. Sections marked optional are included only when they add something.

Name & Contact | **Education** | **Experience** | **Skills / Languages** | **Community Service** | **Publications** | **Interests**

LEAVE THESE OFF

- × **Objectives.** Not used in legal practice; a brief Profile is the modern alternative if you want one.
- × **References** — including "references available upon request."
- × **LSAT scores** and personal data (DOB, SSN, marital status).
- × **Anything unconfirmed** — no journal, honor society, or job you haven't formally accepted.
- × **Latin honors** (cum laude) before graduation, and anything that breaches client confidentiality.

Contact information

Put your name, phone, SU email, and LinkedIn at the top. A physical address is now optional — include one strategically to signal a tie to a region, or omit it for privacy. If you use a personal email, keep it professional.

KATE WALES

kawales@syr.edu · (555) 123-6543 · linkedin.com/in/katewales

Current	Permanent
111 Ivy Ridge Rd, Syracuse, NY 13210	632 Peyton Cir, Los Angeles, CA 90089

Listing two addresses is useful when you're open to both your hometown and Central New York. Avoid unprofessional handles like futurelawyer@email.com.

Education

Current students lead with Education; graduates with 3+ years of work lead with Experience. List schools in reverse-chronological order. Write "J.D." or "Juris Doctor" — **never** "Juris Doctorate." Leave off high school (rare exceptions — ask a counselor).

TRANSFER STUDENTS

- › Lead with Syracuse Law. List your prior school briefly below it.
- › You're no longer a degree candidate there — write "First-year Legal Studies, 20XX–20XX."
- › Include only standout 1L accomplishments (moot court, journal, leadership). Skip prior GPA/rank unless very high.

GPA & class rank

- › List your GPA if it's 3.0 or higher. Match your transcript to the hundredth and **don't round** (3.636 → 3.63).

- List your rank if you're in the top 30%, expressed as a percentage. If you show a fraction (16/223), convert it too — don't leave the math to the employer. Round rank **up**, never down (13.6% → top 14%).
- Grades matter to some employers, but don't obsess — clinics, externships, and work experience strengthen a record over time.

Honors & activities

Put them under subheadings within the relevant school. List by importance — not alphabetically or by date. Add a short parenthetical for anything not self-explanatory (e.g., SPIN — Syracuse Public Interest Network).

PART 03

Describing your experience

List everything under one **Experience** heading — there's no need to separate "Legal" from "Other." Go reverse-chronological, with employer, city/state, title, and dates. Pick one date style (Fall 2019 *or* Aug. 2019 – May 2020) and stay consistent.

HOW TO WRITE A STRONG DESCRIPTION

- Lead each line with an **action verb** (see the Appendix). Build the picture of an achiever.
- Emphasize contributions over routine duties. Highlight law-relevant skills: research and writing, negotiation, analysis, judgment, communication, supervision.
- Past tense for past roles, present tense for current ones. **No first-person pronouns.**
- Skip "Duties included..." Be specific but brief — name legal issues and move on. No long discussions; no case names unless they matter to that employer.

Other sections

- **Military service** — its own section or within Experience. Note commendations and any active-reserve status.
- **Skills / Languages** — list languages you're fluent or highly proficient in; list computer skills only if uncommon (skip Word, Westlaw, Lexis).
- **Community / Volunteer service** — include when relevant, especially for public-interest tracks. Be mindful of controversial affiliations.
- **Publications** — cite in Bluebook format. Note forthcoming work by title and journal ("forthcoming [date]").

› **Interests** — optional, meant to spark conversation. Be specific ("West Indian literature and French cooking," not "reading and cooking"). Anything you list is fair game.

PART 04

The professional look

The key is balance: enough white space that it's easy to read, with restrained use of bold, italic, underline, and capitals. Your resume is a professional document — let it breathe.

FORMATTING BASICS

- 8.5″ × 11″ quality paper; white, off-white, or cream; black ink.
- Name at 13–14 pt; body at 11–12 pt (never 10).
- No borders or graphics. Equal margins, 0.5″–1″.
- Multi-page hard copies: stapled, with your name and page number top-left of each additional page.

CONSISTENCY & ACCURACY

- Format every section the same way once you've chosen a style.
- **Zero typos.** Attention to detail is part of the craft — a sloppy resume signals sloppy work.
- Have at least one other person proofread it. Always review a printed copy.

PART 05

Frequently asked questions

I'm a joint-degree student. How do I show it?
List law first, then your graduate program as a *separate* entry. Combining them is harder to read, especially if you have law honors and activities.

I accepted a position that hasn't started. Add it now?
Yes. Add the employer, city, title, and dates (no description) as the first entry under Experience.

Does it have to be one page?
Whenever possible. Exceptions include fellowships, some government and public-interest roles, and IP positions with a research background. Keep tailored versions for different employers.

Two roles at one employer?
List the employer once, with both roles beneath it in reverse-chronological order and their own dates.

My article was an alternate for publication. List it?

No — that shouldn't go on your resume.

Do I upload to Orange CORE?

Yes, especially for positions that require it. Upload your proofread final as a **PDF**.

Common formatting slips?

Abbreviate states consistently; watch Word's auto-formatting of hyphens and dashes; abbreviate long months (not May, June, or July); and keep the page visually balanced.

I'm still working there. How do I show it?

Your end date is "Present." List it first under Experience and use present-tense verbs.

APPENDIX A

Action verbs

Start each description with a strong verb. A curated shortlist, grouped by the skill it signals:

LEAD & MANAGE

led · directed · managed · supervised · coordinated · chaired · oversaw · administered

ADVISE & ADVOCATE

advised · counseled · negotiated · advocated · mediated · represented · persuaded

RESEARCH & ANALYZE

researched · analyzed · investigated · evaluated · assessed · examined · synthesized · resolved

WRITE & COMMUNICATE

drafted · authored · edited · summarized · presented · briefed · communicated

BUILD & DELIVER

developed · implemented · organized · prepared · created · produced · secured · obtained · reviewed · compiled

APPENDIX B

Full-page examples

Four complete, one-page resumes — each built around a different kind of experience. Use them to see how the same rules apply whether your background is legal internships, externships, service-industry work, or an earlier professional career. Dates are generic (“May 20XX”); the descriptions model the level of detail employers expect.

EXAMPLE A · LAW INTERNSHIPS

ELENA M. VÁSQUEZ

Syracuse, NY 13210 · (315) 555-0148 · emvasquez@syr.edu · linkedin.com/in/emvasquez

EDUCATION

Syracuse University College of Law, Syracuse, NY May 20XX
Juris Doctor Candidate
GPA/Rank: 3.58 (Top 12%)
Honors: Syracuse Law Review, Associate Editor; CALI Award, Legal Communication & Research
Activities: Latin American Law Students Association (Vice President); Volunteer Income Tax Assistance

Binghamton University, Binghamton, NY May 20XX
Bachelor of Arts in Political Science, magna cum laude
Honors: Phi Beta Kappa; Dean's List (all semesters)

EXPERIENCE

Bond, Schoeneck & King, PLLC, Syracuse, NY Summer 20XX
Summer Legal Intern, Litigation Department

- Researched and drafted memoranda on personal jurisdiction and spoliation for a partner preparing dispositive motions in a commercial dispute.
- Drafted deposition outlines and summarized 400+ pages of transcripts, flagging admissions used at a settlement conference.
- Observed depositions and a mediation, then debriefed strategy with the assigned associate.

Volunteer Lawyers Project of CNY, Syracuse, NY Sept. 20XX – May 20XX
Legal Intern, Housing Clinic

- Interviewed low-income tenants under attorney supervision and drafted answers and discovery demands in eviction proceedings.
- Prepared clients for City Court appearances and negotiated two payment-plan stipulations with opposing counsel.

New York State Senate, Albany, NY Summer 20XX
Legislative Intern

- Analyzed pending housing legislation and drafted constituent-response letters and bill summaries for staff counsel.

LANGUAGES & INTERESTS

Spanish (fluent, written and spoken). Competitive rowing and Andean textile weaving.

EXAMPLE B · INTERNSHIPS & EXTERNSHIPS

DAVID R. OKAFOR

Syracuse, NY 13202 · (646) 555-0192 · drokafor@syr.edu · linkedin.com/in/drokafor

EDUCATION

Syracuse University College of Law, Syracuse, NY May 20XX
Juris Doctor Candidate
GPA/Rank: 3.41 (Top 20%)
Honors: Travis Lewin Advocacy Honors Society; Dean's List (3 semesters)
Activities: Moot Court Honor Society; Criminal Law Society (Treasurer)

Howard University, Washington, DC May 20XX
Bachelor of Arts in History, cum laude

EXPERIENCE

U.S. District Court, N.D.N.Y. — Hon. Brenda T. Aldrich, Syracuse, NY Aug. 20XX – Present
Judicial Extern

- Draft bench memoranda analyzing motions to dismiss and for summary judgment in civil-rights and contract matters.
- Research procedural questions for chambers and observe oral argument, pretrial conferences, and sentencing hearings.
- Cite-check and proofread draft opinions before circulation to the judge.

U.S. Attorney's Office, N.D.N.Y. — Criminal Division, Syracuse, NY Jan. 20XX – May 20XX
Intern

- Drafted responses to suppression motions and researched Fourth Amendment issues for Assistant U.S. Attorneys.
- Summarized investigative files and assisted with trial preparation, including exhibit binders and witness outlines.

Onondaga County District Attorney's Office, Syracuse, NY Summer 20XX
Summer Intern, Appeals Bureau

- Researched sentencing and evidentiary issues and drafted sections of an appellate brief later filed with the Fourth Department.

SKILLS & INTERESTS

Westlaw and Lexis certified; conversational French. Jazz trumpet and long-distance cycling.

EXAMPLE C · SERVICE-INDUSTRY WORK

MARISA T. HALLORAN

Syracuse, NY 13210 · (607) 555-0176 · mthallor@syr.edu · linkedin.com/in/marisahalloran

EDUCATION

Syracuse University College of Law, Syracuse, NY May 20XX
Juris Doctor Candidate
GPA: 3.31 **Activities:** Labor & Employment Law Society; Pro Bono Program (75+ hours)

SUNY Cortland, Cortland, NY May 20XX
Bachelor of Science in Communication Studies
Note: Financed 100% of undergraduate education through concurrent employment.

EXPERIENCE

The Stoop Kitchen, Syracuse, NY May 20XX – Present
Shift Lead & Server

- Supervise and train a rotating team of eight servers, resolving guest complaints and coordinating with kitchen staff during high-volume service.
- Reconcile nightly cash and card receipts averaging $6,000 and prepare deposit reports for management.
- Redesigned the opening checklist, cutting setup time by 20 minutes per shift.

Recess Coffee Roasters, Syracuse, NY Aug. 20XX – May 20XX
Barista & Keyholder

- Opened and closed the store independently, managing inventory counts and vendor deliveries.
- Trained six new hires on point-of-sale, food-safety, and customer-service standards.

Wegmans Food Markets, Ithaca, NY Summers 20XX – 20XX
Customer Service Representative

- Processed returns and resolved billing disputes, de-escalating conflicts while enforcing store policy.

COMMUNITY & INTERESTS

Volunteer mediator, Syracuse Community Dispute Resolution Center. Distance running and bread baking.

EXAMPLE D · PRIOR PROFESSIONAL CAREER

NATHAN P. WHITFIELD

Fayetteville, NY 13066 · (315) 555-0121 · npwhitfi@syr.edu · linkedin.com/in/nathanwhitfield

EDUCATION

Syracuse University College of Law, Syracuse, NY May 20XX
Juris Doctor Candidate
GPA: 3.47 **Honors:** Business Law Fellow **Activities:** Corporate Counsel Society (Vice President)

Lehigh University, Bethlehem, PA May 20XX
Bachelor of Science in Finance

EXPERIENCE

Deloitte Consulting LLP, New York, NY 20XX – 20XX
Senior Consultant, Financial Advisory

- Led four-person teams advising Fortune 500 clients on post-merger integration, managing workstreams and reporting directly to client executives.
- Analyzed regulatory-compliance risk across acquisitions and presented findings to senior stakeholders.
- Mentored and evaluated three junior analysts across successive engagements.

Teach For America, Phoenix, AZ 20XX – 20XX
Corps Member, High School Mathematics

- Designed curriculum and instructed 120 students annually; raised proficiency rates 18% over two years.
- Coordinated with families and administrators to build individualized support plans.

SKILLS & INTERESTS

CFA Level II candidate; advanced Excel and financial modeling. Volunteer tax preparation and trail running.

APPENDIX C

Federal resumes

A federal resume (for USAJOBS and most agency portals) is a different document from the one-page resume above. It carries more detail and more required fields, and it must be tailored line-by-line to the Job Opportunity Announcement (JOA). Build it in the **USAJOBS Resume Builder** when you can — it prompts for every required field.

NEW: TWO-PAGE LIMIT

As of **September 27, 2025**, under the OPM Merit Hiring Plan, federal resumes are capped at **two pages** (check length in the USAJOBS Preview tool). The old "longer is better" advice no longer applies. Title 38 and Hybrid Title 38 health-care positions are the exception. Cut to what the JOA actually asks for.

How it differs from a private-sector resume

›Every job needs **hours per week**, **salary**, **supervisor name and phone** (and whether they may be contacted) — details you would never put on a private resume.

›Describe duties in full, results-focused sentences ("Accomplished X, as measured by Y, by doing Z"). Skip bullets-only shorthand and never omit relevant experience — if it isn't written down, HR treats it as not done.

›**Mirror the announcement's keywords.** A separate occupational questionnaire scores you; your resume must back up every rating with evidence.

›Use a plain sans-serif font (Arial, Calibri, Lato), 10–12 pt, 0.5″ margins, and **no tables, columns, text boxes, or graphics** — USAJOBS strips them.

REQUIRED INFORMATION

- ·Announcement number, job title & grade you're applying for
- ·Full name, address, phone, email
- ·Country of citizenship
- ·Veterans' preference / federal status, if any
- ·For each job: employer, city/state, title, start–end (mo./yr.)
- ·Hours per week, salary, supervisor & contact
- ·GS series & grade for any federal job held
- ·Education, plus any JOA-required licenses/transcripts

Leave off: SSN, date of birth, sex, and any photo of yourself.

FEDERAL EXAMPLE · USAJOBS OUTLINE FORMAT

JORDAN A. REYES

123 Comstock Ave., Syracuse, NY 13210 · (315) 555-0132 · jareyes@syr.edu
U.S. Citizen · Veterans' Preference: 5-point (DD-214 available)

Announcement: 25-DOJ-12345 · **Position:** Attorney-Adviser (General) · **Grade:** GS-11

EDUCATION

Syracuse University College of Law, Syracuse, NY May 20XX
Juris Doctor · GPA 3.62 · 88 credit hours
Relevant coursework: Administrative Law, Federal Courts, Evidence, Legal Communication & Research.

University at Albany, SUNY, Albany, NY May 20XX
Bachelor of Arts in Political Science · GPA 3.71

WORK EXPERIENCE

Legal Intern — U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Region 2, New York, NY
June 20XX – Aug. 20XX · 40 hrs/week · Salary: Unpaid (academic credit) · GS series: 0905 (student)
Supervisor: Karen Liu, Assistant Regional Counsel — (212) 555-0170 · May be contacted

- Researched Clean Water Act permitting questions and drafted a 15-page memorandum, cited by the supervising attorney in a settlement recommendation resolving a multi-party enforcement matter.
- Reviewed and summarized 30+ administrative records, improving the team's document-retrieval time by building a shared issue index.
- Communicated findings in weekly briefings to a five-attorney litigation team.

Law Clerk — Onondaga County Attorney's Office, Syracuse, NY
Sept. 20XX – Present · 15 hrs/week · Salary: $18.00/hour
Supervisor: Hon. Marcus Feld (former) — (315) 555-0155 · May be contacted

- Draft memoranda and proposed orders on municipal-liability and civil-procedure issues under the supervision of assistant county attorneys.
- Analyze incoming claims and flag statute-of-limitations issues, contributing to timely responses in 40+ matters.

CERTIFICATIONS, SKILLS & ACTIVITIES

Westlaw and Lexis certified; proficient in Spanish (professional working proficiency). Member, Syracuse Public Interest Network; Pro Bono Program (60+ hours).

NOTE Shown condensed for the guide. A real federal resume expands each duty to fully address the announcement's qualifications — while still fitting the two-page limit.