

How to Prepare a Legal Writing Sample

Once you've chosen your sample, spend some time revising it. You want to make sure it reflects the very best you have to offer.

1. Make sure the structure is clear and flows well.

- Are you using IRAC, CRAC, or CREAC? Are you using them properly?
- Do your headings relate to one another and provide a clear roadmap for your argument?
- Are you using topic sentences and transitions?

2. Proofread for grammar, punctuation, and typos. Then proofread again.

- Use Writing Center handouts to proofread for common grammar and punctuation issues.
- After you've finished proofreading, take a break and do something else. Then come back and read through your sample one last time for typos and any remaining errors.

3. Double check your citations.

- Have you cited everything that needs to be cited?
- Are your citations clear and consistent?
- It's generally not necessary to Bluebook your citations as long as they're consistent. That said, using the Bluebook is a good way to make them consistent.

4. Format your writing sample.

- Use the same header you use for your cover letter and resume.
- Include a *brief* paragraph, either at the beginning of the writing sample or on a cover sheet, that provides context. Depending on where you're applying, Career Services, Social Justice Initiatives, and the Office of Judicial Clerkships have good cover letter examples. Check their websites for information.

Final Note: The CLS Writing Center resource page contains helpful information regarding legal writing and many of the specific issues noted above. Visit:

<https://www.law.columbia.edu/academics/experiential/legal-writing/writing-center/legal-writing-resources>