

The Quick Writing Sample Checklist

- **Highlight Your Skills.** A Writing Sample should highlight your legal reasoning and analytical skills.
- **Keep it Short.** Unless an employer indicates otherwise, a Writing Sample should be 5 -10 pages long, with 7 pages as a target length.
- **Attach a Cover Sheet.** Each Writing Sample should include a Cover Sheet, setting forth the following:
 - ? Original purpose of the Writing Sample
 - ? When and for whom the sample was originally written
 - ? If the Writing Sample is an excerpt, the nature of the larger document and the context of the excerpt
 - ? If confidential information has been redacted, explain the nature of what was redacted (*e.g.*, all party names have been redacted)
- **Keep It Current.** You may want to use a recent LS memo/brief or a moot court brief; current works will most likely reflect your best legal analysis and writing skills. Ideally, your Writing Sample will be less than *two* years old.
- **Proofread, Proofread, Proofread.** Typos, poor grammar, incorrect citation form, and inaccurate citations can and will be used against you. Your Writing Sample should reflect your best writing ability in all ways. Use John Marshall's excellent Writing Resource Center for any assistance you seek regarding writing issues.
- **Excerpt If Necessary.** You may find that to best demonstrate your legal writing and analytical skills, you need to excerpt the legal analysis section of a larger sample. When doing so, remember to describe the nature of the larger document on the Cover Sheet, as well as the context of the analysis.
- **Respect Confidentiality.** If you use a brief or other writing taken from a job or externship, you must obtain permission from your supervisor and redact any confidential information (including blacking out party names). The Cover Sheet should note that information has been redacted.
- **Submit a Clean Copy.** If using a Writing Sample from Lawyering Skills or from any other source where comments may have been added, *do not submit a copy with comments on it.* Rather, make revisions, proofread, and then submit.
- **Consider the Employer, Part I.** When possible, provide to the employer a Writing Sample that demonstrates your ability to practice law in an area of interest to the employer. For example, if you are applying to work for the Environmental Protection Agency, a writing sample concerning environmental law may be useful.
- **Consider the Employer, Part II.** Some employers have specific Writing Sample guidelines, either described in their job posting or on their website. Make sure the Writing Sample you submit adheres to such guidelines (*e.g.*, The City of Chicago, Department of Law has its own specific guidelines)
- **Only Take Credit For Your Work.** We suggest that you choose a Writing Sample that was *not* co-authored. If your Writing Sample was authored by more than one person, you must describe in the Cover Sheet the extent of the editing and identify the portions you wrote.

Remember: Your Writing Sample is an employer's first impression of the work product you will provide.