

19 Legal CVs

Guidelines

- Clear headings with different text size help the reader find the information they want. Fancy styles and fonts are better suited to CVs for creative jobs
- A two page CV is normally expected. Early in your degree when you have limited experience, you might want to use a single-sided CV for speculative applications
- Putting your name in a footnote can help avoiding the pages getting separated when the employer prints it out. If printing yourself, use good quality white or cream paper
- Law firms will expect your applications to be error free. Spell-check helps but don't rely on it and pay attention to punctuation and appropriate use of capital letters. It's hard to pick up your own errors, so try asking a friend to proof read for you
- Recruiters like to find dates easily. One way is to put dates at the left margin, followed by the name of the employer or place of study and job title or qualification obtained. Try to do this across a single line
- Style guides can ensure consistency of headings and accurate alignment of text but avoid standardised CV templates which reduce the individuality of your document
- Think what recruiters most want to know about you. Give most space and prominence to the qualifications and experience that are most relevant. You can find out what some of the leading legal recruiters are looking for at <http://targetjobs.co.uk/career-sectors/law-solicitors/applications-and-interviews/skills-graduate-recruiters-at-law-firms-lo>. LawCareers.net has similar information at www.lawcareers.net/Information/Features/Detail.aspx?r=1269
- Try to show that you can make a positive difference by concentrating on significant outcomes from work experience and interests rather than listing everything you've done
- Try to describe your skills in a way that is appropriate for a particular application. For example, all lawyers need strong communication skills but the people you meet as a City lawyer are different from the clients in high street practice, so select relevant examples from your own communication experience

It is vital you check everything you have written as even the tiniest of errors will probably mean your application is rejected. You'd kick yourself if all the hours spent on your CV content are wasted.

A structure that suits most applications

Title. Putting 'Curriculum Vitae' is old-fashioned, so use your first and last names as the title. If your first name could also be a last name, try putting your last name in bold or a larger font.

Personal details. You don't need to use the heading 'Personal details' but you normally include address (and contact address if different); phone number(s) and email address(es) – but make sure they are up to date. Nationality is optional but it is good to show that you have permission to work in the UK if you are not an EEA or British national. If your gender is not obvious from your name, you might wish to include it so that recruiters know how to address correspondence to you or put in your title (Mr/Ms etc) to make it clear. Make sure this section looks professional by avoiding email addresses that say too much about your personal life! The Kent careers website gives examples of some addresses which might give recruiters the wrong impression!
www.kent.ac.uk/careers/cv.htm

Personal profile/career objective. A personal profile can work well if you have something very specific that you want to highlight but recruiters don't like profiles such as 'highly motivated, ambitious law student with excellent communication and team working skills' that look like

everyone else's and provide no evidence of the skills you claim to have. The sort that might work is 'Multilingual LLM student with a 1st at undergraduate level and six months' international legal experience.....' in a single sentence this emphasises five things that could interest employers ie languages, study at Master's level, excellent academic results, significant work experience and an international perspective. A career objective might be similar but also mention what you are looking for eg 'seeking experience in banking law.' It is hard to write the kind of profile which will really make you stand out.

Education. This could also be entitled 'Education and qualifications' or 'Education and awards.' It's usual to list qualifications in reverse chronological order, stating degree modules and grades as well as A level and GCSE grades. Mention your dissertation either for the relevance of the content to the firm or for the research, analytical and organisational skills it developed. Use columns and list A levels or GCSEs in as few lines as possible to save space. You don't need to name every GCSE subject but recruiters will be interested in number of A*, A and B grades and you could mention grades (if good) for core subjects such as English, maths and modern languages. Include any major academic prizes you won in school, college or university. Include academic qualifications only; other qualifications such as IT skills certificates could go into a skills section if relevant.

Legal experience. List in reverse chronological order and include voluntary work. You can include attendance at open days and activities like the TARGETchances events as well as work experience. Emphasise your most significant achievements, knowledge gained and skills learned rather than listing every single thing you have done and give the most space to significant responsibilities. Use bullet points, be concise and avoid repetition if you have done the same work on several occasions.

Other work experience. You may have non-legal experience that is particularly relevant to your legal applications. Examples include commercial experience for commercial law or welfare/advisory work for legal aid or public sector practice. If so, you could make this a separate section. Avoid detailed descriptions of everything you did in casual jobs, but give a brief overview, information on any unusual achievements, such as rapid promotion or extra responsibility, and describe transferable skills. While bar work might not seem very relevant, successfully handling awkward customers will probably have developed your ability to defuse most difficult situations.

Skills. Most of your skills will be evident in your descriptions of work experience and extracurricular activities, but you might have a short section detailing skills such as IT competence, languages and driving licence. Different firms will be interested in different languages; those doing multinational business normally like European languages and those relating to other countries in which they operate, whereas an immigration practice will welcome languages that are relevant to their clients.

Interests and achievements. Use a heading that emphasises your particular strengths such as positions of responsibility or voluntary work. Think what your activities say about you – bigger firms of solicitors like sports, other team activities and evidence of outstanding achievement. Aim to show yourself as a rounded and interesting person who can manage your time well enough to combine getting a good degree with extra curricular activities. But if you have had to work long hours in a part-time job during your degree and this has limited your time for hobbies, don't be afraid to mention this under work experience – you could just indicate the number of hours you work in an average week

CV examples

Look at the CV examples and sample covering letters but don't be tempted to simply copy either style or content. Your CV is likely to be the first contact you have with a firm, so take the time to produce the best document possible. Note that larger firms have their own application forms and will not normally accept CVs.

Nasreen Khan

27 Hillingdon Rise, Uxbridge UB8 2XY

Naskhan3@brunelmail.co.uk

First year LLB student with legal, administrative and customer service experience, seeking legal work shadow or work experience

Education

2011 – 2015 LLB (Hons) Law

Brunel University, London

2011 - 2012

Modules: English Legal Institutions and Methods, Contract Law, Public Law and Criminal Law

2009 – 2011

A levels

Heathland College, Uxbridge

A2 Sociology (A), A2 History (C), A2 Law (B), AS Economics (B)

2008 – 2009

GCSEs

Parkside School, Uxbridge

11 subjects: 2 A*, 4A, 3B and 2 C including English Language A*, Maths B and Spanish A*

Legal Experience

June – July 2011

Attended County, Magistrates and Crown Court hearings to develop knowledge of criminal and civil proceedings

May 2010

Junior legal assistant

Prentice, Hall and Parker, Ealing

- Learned office procedures and business communications through operating front desk and administrative tasks
 - Attended client meetings on family, employment and property matters and discussed cases with the solicitors
-

Employment

June – Aug 2011

Part-time admin assistant ART Group, Slough

- Dealt with telephone queries for this mail order business ensuring that orders were met on time
- Created and updated a new customer and supplier database which required close attention to detail
- Developed excellent oral communication skills from solving customers' problems and negotiating with suppliers

Pre 2011

Retail experience and voluntary care work with adults with learning difficulties helped me communicate with people from all walks of life

Skills

- Confident user of MS Office including Excel and Access
- Fluent in Urdu and Punjabi; taking Spanish lessons
- Full clean UK driving licence

(Miss) Daljit Sagoo

Tel: 0208 000 0000 Mobile: 07901 000000
Email: ds9@brumail.co.uk
Address: 20 Brunel Way, Uxbridge UB8 3PH

EDUCATION & AWARDS

2008-2012 Brunel University, Uxbridge

LLB (Hons) Law – achieved **high 2:1** in level 2

2009 Contract Law (B) English Legal Institutions and Methods (B)
Criminal Law (B) and Public Law (A)

2009 Company Law (A), Competition Law (A) Law of the European
Union (B) Tort Law (B) Employment Law (A)

2001-2008 Southlands High School, Wandsworth

2008 A levels: Business Studies (A) English Literature (B) Computing (B)
Awarded Greenhow Prize for Business

2006 GCSEs: 7 at grade A/A* incl. English, Maths and French, 3 at grade B

LEGAL EXPERIENCE

Jul 11 Attended open days at **Herbert Smith** and **Freshfields Bruckhaus Deringer**

Jan-Jul 11 **ABC Law, Harrow** Six month placement in a mixed practice firm mainly in the
Personal Injury Department

- In the last few months I was given case management responsibility for smaller claims and worked with minimum supervision
- Daily liaison with clients, medical staff and insurers developed strong negotiation skills to determine liability and compensation
- Responsible for legal research on cases and drafting accurate documentation
- Fast paced and demanding environment developed my time management and client care skills to a high level
- Talked to other solicitors in my own time to develop knowledge of commercial property, commercial litigation and employment law

Jul 09-Feb 10 **Unisys Ltd, Uxbridge**

Six month placement in Legal Department

- Gained significant knowledge of contract law by working on multi-national and multi-million pound contracts
- Reviewed existing and drafted new contracts developing close attention to detail, personal responsibility and technical as well as legal knowledge
- Liaised with sales and commercial staff and contributed to team meetings to agree sound contractual terms
- Liaised with legal teams in suppliers, client companies and local and central government in the UK and overseas

Aug 08 **Wandsworth Council**

Spent a month with the legal team at Wandsworth Council, gaining insights into legal areas including contracts, employment and environment

COMMERCIAL EXPERIENCE

- July 2010 **PricewaterhouseCoopers, Uxbridge**
3 week vacation scheme in assurance and taxation departments
- Gained understanding of balance sheets and basic accounting procedures
 - Undertook research into the assets and profitability of client companies and their suppliers, including due diligence
 - Experienced a takeover bid for a UK manufacturing company by an international rival and the tax savings achievable through an offshore operation
- Sept 0–date **Mujara Holdings Ltd, London**
Ongoing experience in family business employing 20 staff and with an international operation and customer base
- Built knowledge of import and export procedures and tariffs
 - Developed strong internal and external relationships to build sales and contributed to ideas for new product lines and markets
 - Gained good commercial sense and assisted in preparation of accounts for audit
- 2008 **Abacus Mortgage Corporation** – summer job in telesales
- Gained extensive knowledge of financial products and ability to communicate their benefits succinctly to a wide range of potential clients.
 - Consistently met or exceeded targets.
- 2007 **Young Enterprise** – finance manager of a profitable company making personalised mouse mats

RELEVANT SKILLS

IT: Fully conversant with all aspects of Microsoft Office
Driving: Full clean driving licence

ADDITIONAL WORK EXPERIENCE

- 2009 Harry's Place, Uxbridge. Evening shifts in a hectic town centre bar – developed good organisational and diplomacy skills
- 2006-2008 Agency jobs in offices and shops through which I've learned to fit quickly into new teams and work with a broad spectrum of people. Have also become familiar with standard office systems

INTERESTS & ACHIEVEMENTS

- Elected member of the departmental staff – student committee. Involves representing student views on academic matters and negotiating changes to the course
- Active member of Law Society and compete successfully in moots
- I enjoy competitive sport and play in Brunel badminton & volleyball teams
- Have travelled extensively in the USA, Asia and Middle East building cultural awareness and a wide network of contacts

REFERENCES

Dr Susan Morgan, Personal Tutor, School of Law – susan.morgan@brunel.ac.uk
Mr Nasreem Ahmed, Partner, ABC Law – nasreem.ahmed@abclaw.co.uk