

**WRITING SAMPLES FOR JUDICIAL EXTERNSHIPS**

**Some Dos and Don'ts for your writing sample submissions:**

***1) Don't submit a writing sample longer than 10 double-spaced pages.***

Writing samples should be five to ten double-spaced pages in length, excluding any cover page. A cover page (see example below) explaining the assignment is always recommended rather than providing the entirety of an assignment that is longer than 10 pages.

Judges are looking for a writing sample that demonstrates organization skills and highlights how you express your thoughts on paper via legal reasoning and analytical skills. They look for writing that is clear and concise, and will not spend time reading past the first 10 pages you give, so put your best pages up front!

***2) Do submit your best sample.***

When using a writing sample that you drafted for a legal writing class, choose the assignment that earned the highest grade, and incorporate your professor's comments and edits into your final writing sample.

If you choose to use something you did for an employer and not a bench memo or other piece of writing done for law school, you must obtain permission to use a document and redact confidential/sensitive information. It does not matter how well you write if you have demonstrated poor judgment and thoughtlessness by failing to remove all client names and other confidential information. If you must, delete confidential information and insert fictitious material; it helps to maintain the flow of the text and makes the writing sample easier to read.

Use examples that include persuasive writing, and avoid samples that did not require research, or are scholarly rather than practical in nature.

Always provide something recent to show off your current skill level, preferably something within the last two years.

***3) Do proofread and label your pages.***

Proofread your writing sample several times. Writing samples should be free of spelling, grammatical and typographical errors. They should be easy to read, with ample margins and readable font, and **include your name and page numbers on every page** of your writing sample. Others may submit a similar writing sample, so you do not want any confusion.

4) ***Do include a cover page.***

Believe it or not, your name is the most important and oft-forgotten information on a writing sample. Use the **exact** same “heading” (your name and contact information) you use on your resume and cover letter. Additionally, include an explanation of when and for whom you wrote the product. If a writing sample is an excerpt of a longer piece, describe the nature of the larger document and provide context and background information regarding the excerpt. If you feel you have omitted some significant parts of the argument, the cover page is the place to specifically and briefly note them—“I omitted Arguments III and IV from the sample.”

Here are some example cover page statements:

**SAUL GOODMAN**  
**160 Juan Tabo Blvd NE**  
**Albuquerque, NM 87123**  
**Cell: 312.555.1212**  
[sgoodman@kentlaw.iit.edu](mailto:sgoodman@kentlaw.iit.edu)

**Writing Sample**

The following is an internal memorandum written to answer whether a defendant to a murder charge, Lalo Salamanca, had a strong argument that he acted in self-defense. I drafted this memorandum for my Legal Writing I course in Fall 2022.

OR

**A NOTE ABOUT THE WRITING SAMPLE**

This writing sample is a pre-trial memorandum for a case I worked on at the firm of Hamlin, Hamlin, & McGill. All party names, cities, and other personal details have been changed at the request of the managing attorney, who has provided approval for the usage of this sample. I have removed the caption, issues of fact and law section, and the prayer for relief.

OR

**Writing Sample**

This writing sample is a portion of a brief written to argue on the behalf of New Mexico State in the case recently heard by the Supreme Court, *State of New Mexico v. Saul Goodman*. I drafted this brief for my Appellate Advocacy course in Fall 2022. The brief has been excised for length.

***QUESTION PRESENTED***

Whether New Mexico’s law, put into place for public safety, requiring a person to show they have an individualized reason to obtain a license to publicly carry a firearm for self-defense, violates the Second Amendment.