



CREATING AN EFFECTIVE WRITING SAMPLE

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Writing samples - Initial Concerns

- **Employers frequently use writing samples to eliminate candidates.**
- **Employers read writing samples quickly and make snap decisions.**
- **Do not send a sample unless asked.**

Writing samples - Purpose

- Employers use samples to get a reliable measure of your abilities as a legal writer.
- Use the discussion section of a legal memo or the argument section of a brief.
- When selecting a sample from several choices, select. . .
 - Brief before memo before anything else
 - Less facts better than more facts
 - Simple issue better than complex issue
 - Clear resolution in your client's favor better than not

Writing samples – Keys to success

- **Employers look for well-articulated facts, distinct issues, and thorough analysis that supports the conclusion.**
- **Your sample should require only one reading.**

Writing samples - Format

- **Limit the sample to five pages.**
- **Double space for readability.**
- **Make your product look impeccable, especially the first page.**
- **Add a cover sheet that identifies you and summarizes the facts.**

Writing samples – Special Concerns

- **Describe outside editing or review in the cover sheet.**
- **Edit group work to make it your own.**
- **Ask permission to use client work product.**

Writing samples – Step by step

1. Cut the statement of facts to a cover sheet (see step 6); cut out everything else that is not the argument or discussion section.
2. Cut the argument or discussion to one issue.
3. Cut out section headings, but do not cut point headings.
4. Format to double space, 12 point type size and 1 inch margins, and play with the margins further if doing so will shave a page.
5. Consider substantive edits if needed to get to five pages.
6. Draft cover sheet that includes a paragraph of identification and a paragraph summarizing the operative facts (see sample cover sheet handout); merge the cover sheet into the file containing the sample.
7. Review the sample with cover sheet for typos and citation form.
8. Again review the sample with cover sheet for typos and citation form.