

Exploring Summer Legal Job Opportunities

There are various [professional summer legal opportunities](#) available to students during the two summers of law school. Law firms, public interest organizations, government agencies, judges, and professors in need of research assistants hire law students.

Your 1L Summer:

The immediate goal for your 1L summer is to do something that will either increase your legal knowledge or improve upon the skills that you will use during your career. By the end of summer, the aim is to articulate what you have learned and how you are more prepared for a legal career. Your 1L summer is an ideal opportunity to pursue what interests you. Take the time to learn about the different experiences offered, and hopefully, find a match to your interests. Law schools and many legal employers adhere to the rules set out by the National Association of Legal Career Professionals (NALP), which requires first-year students and employers not to initiate contact with one another, interview, or make offers before December 1, to allow students more time to acclimate to law school. However, to prevent your job search from interfering with your school work and exam preparation, you may wish to research employers and prepare your resume and cover letters well before December 1. If you do not do this well in advance of final exams, it is best to wait until you have completed them. Career counselors are available to review your cover letters as well as your resumes. It is strongly recommended that you make an appointment with one of your career resources in November and throughout your time in your law school. If you can send letters early in December, you can potentially take advantage of the winter break to interview.

Your 2L Summer:

Depending on your career goals and the type of employer you wish to work for after graduation, the summer following your 2L year may have a different focus. Many law firms and some other legal employers have 2L students working for them during the summer. [At the end of summer, they may make an offer for permanent employment following graduation.](#) Other employers view the 2L summer as a way for many students to demonstrate an interest in or commitment to a particular work. For example, many public interests or government employers look very favorably on graduates who have spent their summers doing public interest or government work.

When Do I Need To Start Looking For Summer Employment?

Generally, internship application deadlines for government and public interest jobs fall in January, February, or mid-March. Typically, mid-sized and small firms hire interns as needed, and many solo attorneys and small firms do not begin to think about their summer intern needs until much later in the spring semester.

As soon as you get to law school, it would help if you thought [about a summer internship](#) because your first semester will be so busy. You should schedule an appointment with a career counselor during your 1L year to review your resume and discuss your job search strategy and timeline.

How Do Most Law Students Find Their Summer Job?

It is not enough to do a couple of online searches to find a summer internship in law school. This is an [excellent start for your search](#), but it is just the beginning. Do not limit yourself to just one source. Consider these suggestions:

Job posting sites for legal positions can be found on the usual suspects. Make sure not to limit your search to one site. [Make use of multiple sources](#), including Indeed.com, Lawyers Weekly, and Craigslist. Do not forget to check the career services office of your law school for job and internship listings.

Maintain your network. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, 85 percent of Americans get jobs through friends or family. Your network can also be an invaluable component of your job search strategy in

law school. More than a third of our students find their summer jobs through friends, networking, or self-introduction. Spread the word about your internship search. Mentors and professors can be beneficial in connecting you with job opportunities. Someone you know might know of an opening that would be perfect for you! You can start networking now!

Contact legal employers. If there are no summer jobs posted, contact them. You can be proactive in your search by [contacting firms, attorneys, and legal organizations directly](#). As you would when applying for posted jobs, stay organized and follow up with each employer you contact. You can search for employers using online legal directories such as Martindale and LinkedIn by defining criteria such as practice area, location, and firm size. Contact the employers to inquire about job opportunities. Nevertheless! Avoid cold calling hundreds of employers. Concentrate your search on law firms and legal organizations that may need interns but do not have the time to recruit them. Small and medium-sized firms will appreciate the chance to connect with you.

Apply for a job with the federal government. Over the next few years, many federal employees will be eligible for retirement, which could result in a hiring boom. You can find legal internships at USAJobs.

Government and public interest agencies can be contacted. State and local government websites should list all state agencies so that you can research and contact them directly.

Request reciprocity. To access a [law school's job or internship listings](#), you may have to request reciprocity from a law school in that state.

Flexibility is key. You may find opportunities outside major metropolitan areas if you have a car. You can also become an unpaid legal intern while ` at the same time. Your chances of finding summer employment are better if you are flexible regarding location and pay.

Get in touch with Career Services. Lastly, let your law school's career services office do what it does best: help you find a job! [You should never be afraid to ask for help in law school](#) (and after you graduate). [Review your resume](#), writing sample, and cover letter; schedule a mock interview to improve your interview skills; and meet with a career counselor to discuss your job search.

See Also: [For Legal Internships That Were More Than Five Years Ago, Should They Be Listed \(e.g., 2011 to 2013\)?](#)

Types of Summer Jobs and How to Find Them

Depending on your career interests, there are several types of career employees that [hire a law student](#) for summer legal intern jobs:

1. Law Firms or In-House Counsel:

Law students [obtain positions with a law firm or in-house legal department](#) for summer legal jobs every year. The primary means of securing such summer associate positions is by [writing samples and letters to employers](#). These employers range in office size and practice groups. They generally hire students much earlier in the year than public interest and government employers.

Identifying Law Firms: You can check in the NALP Directory at www.nalpdirectory.com, to identify which NALP member firms may hire first-year or upper-class students. However, remember that you should not rule out an investigation of mid-size and smaller law firms; most of them are not NALP members. Many other sources will help you identify law firms and other legal employers in [conducting a job search](#).

2. Public Interest Organizations & Government Agencies:

Popular organizations for students include the [American Civil Liberties Union](#), the [Sierra Club Legal Defense Fund](#), [Public Defender Offices](#), [The Department of Justice](#), [State Attorneys General Offices](#), and [Legal Aid Offices](#). Not only is there an intrinsic value to working for an organization that acts to promote justice by representing individuals, groups, causes, or issues identified as traditionally under-represented or unrepresentative in our society, but these positions also often offer unparalleled practical experience for law students. While there are usually numerous positions available in public interest organizations, many of

these organizations cannot afford to pay summer interns. Note, however, that the Law School and the [Public Interest Law](#) Foundation (PILF) annually support summer interns through endowments and grants from fundraising efforts.

North Carolina-bound students also routinely receive IOLTA grants as a source of funding. In addition to Career & Professional Development Center (CPDC) and the Office of Public Interest web pages, law schools subscribe to several online job search tools for public interest employment, including PSLawNet (www.pslawnet.org), which lists public interest conferences, internships, fellowships, employment opportunities, and non-profit organizations. You will also find print public interest guides in the CPDC library and the Public Interest Suite.

3. Judicial Internship/Externship:

A judicial summer internship or [externship](#) (the words are synonymous) is the summer equivalent of a traditional post-graduate judicial clerkship, except [that most externships do not pay](#). Do not let this discourage you. These are excellent jobs and can be especially useful to students intending to pursue a career in litigation or [make legal contacts in a community](#) they wish to practice. The American Bar Association provides \$1500 to minority and financially disadvantaged students for internships in ten states under their Judicial Intern Opportunity Program. Other states have programs where law students can be paid to work as judicial interns. North Carolina has such a program for in-state residents. Many third-year students will apply to clerk for a judge following graduation. While that application process does not begin until the summer before your third year, an externship can not only help you decide if a clerkship would interest you but may also provide you with a valuable contact within the judiciary.

4. Research Assistantships for Professors:

Several dozen students assist law school professors with a variety of projects. Professors often need assistance in updating a casebook or researching materials for a law review article. In addition to providing you with excellent training in legal research and writing, [the professor will be able to serve as a reference for you in the future](#). This is especially important if you will be seeking a judicial clerkship after graduation. Watch for announcements about these positions in March and April, or contact a professor yourself.

5. Working Abroad:

Each year several students find summer internships in Europe and Asia with private or public employers. Many coordinate this through law schools' summer institutes in Geneva and Hong Kong. Often, these students are in the JD/LLM program or have second language proficiency. [These jobs can be competitive and often result from contacts developed by the International Studies Office](#), CPDC, or friends of law school practicing abroad. Watch for programming about these opportunities and make an appointment to meet with the faculty and staff in the International Studies Office.

When Do Most First-Year Law Students Find Their Jobs? When Should You Start Panicking?

The majority of 1Ls find their first jobs at different times of the year. By February, some students will know where they will work, while others will not find employment until April.

Throughout the late spring, small firms will continue to look for summer interns and law clerks. It is still possible to find a job for the summer even if you have not found one by the end of April.

Can I limit my career options if I work in a field I am not sure I want to practice after graduation?

Not at all. You will be able to find future employment as a lawyer if you gain legal experience. Many of the skills you acquire (e.g., research, writing, interpersonal, etc.) in one area of law can be transferred to another.

See Also: [Top 10 Ways to Get Your First Job After Law School](#)

Conclusion

It is crucial to explore your options and think about what you want in a summer legal job. The more time you spend researching, the better your chance of finding something that suits your interests. So if you are looking for a summer internship program or externship with private or public employers, make sure to [look into opportunities through your law school and other career resources](#). It is also possible to find jobs at small firms if you conduct legal research throughout the late spring (and even after April). But you should start the search early to have enough time to finish all of your applications.