Comprehensive List of Litigation Skills for Law Interns

Fact Gathering and Investigation

- Processed medical releases
- Collected medical records (doctors, hospitals, etc.)
- Summarized medical losses
- Conducted asset checks (bank records, deeds, mortgages, liens, etc.)
- Obtained employment histories

Legal Research

- Checked court rules on new appellate procedures
- Found all state statutes applying to wetlands easements (for municipal board hearing on subdivision)

Pleadings

- Drafted summons and complaints for several personal injury cases, including one with multiple defendants
- Reviewed answers and summarized them (personal injury)

Discovery

- Prepared interrogatories for opponent (personal injury)
- Prepared answers to interrogatories (personal injury)
- Requested admissions (personal injury)
- Summarized deposition transcripts (personal injury)

Trial Preparation

- Prepared exhibits (municipal board hearing on subdivision)
- Prepared trial notebook (personal injury case)
- Issued subpoenas (personal injury case)

No matter what your area of internship work, you are likely to have many incidents of overlap into other specialized areas. Review your internship records in the light of the following list and note all examples of such overlap. The more overlapping skills you can identify, the broader your career prospects become.

- Business formation: preparing documents for creating partnerships, corporations, limited liability entities, proprietorships, and mergers and acquisitions
- Corporate maintenance: preparing minutes of shareholders and stockholders meetings, complying with blue-sky laws, and preparing for stock issuance and redemptions
Contracts: drafting or reviewing agreements for services, products, real estate, and credit transactions

Real estate: preparing for purchase, sale, leasing, mortgaging, building and development, or foreclosure; also real estate management, and - searching and abstracting titles

Employment law: preparing the paperwork for hiring, dismissal,; also assisting with governmental compliance procedures

Regulatory law: researching and assisting with carrying out environmental, land use, workplace safety, product safety, consumer protection, and taxation rules

Benefits law: providing procedural assistance with unemployment compensation, Social Security, Aid to Families with Dependent Children, Medicaid, Medicare

Estate planning and probate: drafting wills, trusts, and health care directives; also probating decedents’ estates

 Intellectual property: assisting in acquiring and protecting patents, copyrights, and trademarks

Bankruptcy and collections: assisting debtors’ or creditors’ attorneys in resolving debt matters

Transactional work does more than create expertise in specialized areas of the law. It may also lead to skills not readily acquired in a litigation practice.

Most likely, you have made many professional contacts during your internship. The number and nature of these contacts may have little imp stance academically, but they have tremendous significance to you personally.

Someday, one of these individuals might be a source of job referrals or letters of recommendation. Others may be a source of guidance or assistance in carrying out a future assignment. You might need their advice on unfamiliar procedures or needed resources.

Remembering who these people are, what they do, and where you can find them could be important to you in the future. Consequently, identifying these people and their areas of expertise is a significant aspect of internship learning. Such documentation should be preserved for future reference.

To ensure that you can reestablish contact with anyone who might be helpful, compile a permanent list of your professional contacts. Along with each person’s name, also record each one’s office affiliation, title or position, address, phone number, fax number, and e-mail address (if available). Because professionals change jobs from time to time, putting a date on each entry helps you recognize when an address and phone number may need updating.

Use the following categories as a starting point. Write the name of each professional acquaintance you can think of who corresponds to each category.

• Lawyers
• Paralegals
• Secretaries
• Elected officials
• Government agency personnel
• Courthouse personnel
• Clerks and officials at registries of deeds and probate
• Law enforcement personnel
• Banking professionals
• Insurance professionals
• Real estate professionals
• Personnel at nonprofit human service organizations

Organizing your list of professional contacts according to areas of expertise or occupation makes forgotten contacts easier to locate than listing them all alphabetically. Specialty practice areas might also provide additional categories for you. When many names appear under one category, arrange the names within that category alphabetically, if you wish.

Make a permanent record of this list. Leave room for additional names and data in the future. As you conduct your litigation attorney job search in the months to come, your network of professional contacts will surely expand.

In other paralegal courses, you may have learned that conflicts of interest most often occur when a lawyer changes jobs. If the client of a lawyer’s new office is in an adversarial position to a client that the lawyer represented in the past, then that lawyer may have a conflict of interest. The newly hired lawyer—and possibly the entire office—could be disqualified from involvement in the current case.
In many jurisdictions, a law firm can be disqualified from a case due to a paralegal’s conflict of interest just as it can for a lawyer’s conflict, so a paralegal’s previous casework may have to be cross-checked, too. To protect themselves and their clients, growing numbers of offices are asking newly hired paralegals for the same kind of case list demanded of newly hired lawyers. As a job candidate, every paralegal intern should be prepared for this possibility.

Of course, the information on your client list is highly confidential. It is not compiled for your school’s benefit. It certainly should never be shared with friends or family. It is provided only to future employers and only after you have been hired, so that continued confidentiality can be ensured.

Your list of cases should include the following information:

- The full name and address of your office’s client
- The case name, date, docket number, and cause of action (nature of the case)
- The full names of related parties such as co-owners of disputed property or directors, officers, and major shareholders of a corporation

Even if a prospective employer does not inquire about former clients and cases, discovering that you have a list available can be an impressive factor in your favor. It shows you are keenly attuned to the ethical implications of law practice and prepared for all contingencies. Having such a list demonstrates your willingness to take responsibility for protecting the office’s clients—in ways the office might not yet have considered.

You may change jobs several times in the years to come. Each time you do, this list may once again become critically important. Update your client list regularly, such as when you undergo a salary review, when your hiring contract is renewed, or on each anniversary of your hiring. And never leave a law office position without making sure your list is up to date.