

## Berkeley Law Career Development Office

### Listing Interests on Your Resume

You may have questions about whether to add an Interests section to your resume, and if you do, what to include. An Interests section can serve a variety of purposes in connection with your candidacy for a job. Three of the most common goals of your interests are to:

- 1. Show skills that may be relevant to the job.** Mastery of a musical instrument can show commitment, discipline, and creativity. Playing on a competitive sports team can show teamwork, competitive spirit, and work ethic. Did you tour the Americas by motorcycle? Besides being a great conversation starter (see below), this might flag your perseverance, sense of adventure, and problem-solving skill sets.
- 2. Serve as a conversation starter.** Sometimes interesting or unfamiliar items can be an easy way for an interviewer to break into conversation with you. Did you list *capoeira*? That might solicit questions about what that is and how you became involved with it. Obsessed with *The Great British Baking Show*? Be ready to talk about why it's your favorite show. You might even connect on a personal level if the interviewer has the same interest. In fact, some recruiters have noted that they try to intentionally match candidates with interviewers based on common interests.
- 3. Show a different element of your personality.** This can indicate your well-roundedness beyond your legal skills, as well as support that you are an interesting person who will be a good colleague and good with clients. Round out the narrative your resume tells about you by adding a dimension that is not already covered. For example, if your resume is very intellectually-focused (advanced degrees and research positions), you could list your more social interests to show that side of your personality.

#### *Tips for listing Interests:*

- Only list 3-5 interests. Including a very long list of interests may signal that you do not understand how busy attorneys are or a lack of commitment.
- Keep the reasons in mind for why you include an interest as a guide to decide what level of detail to include. A generic interest, such as "travel" or "reading," doesn't do much to differentiate you as a candidate or serve as a conversation starter. Try something more specific (see chart below for some examples).
- List items that you are ready and willing to talk about in an interview. If you list "19th Century French Literature," be ready to share your favorite books from this genre or a reason why you find it fascinating. If you list golf, make sure it's something you actually do and are ready to engage in a conversation about it.
- Avoid risqué or controversial items, for obvious reasons -- this is a resume! Beware items that may seem innocuous but that can lead to inappropriate or awkward interview conversations. For example, if you list "stand-up comedy" as an interest, be ready to answer a question about who your favorite stand-up comedians are, while avoiding those whose content may not be work appropriate. Likewise, if you list "acting" or "improv," you might prompt an unwelcome invitation to demonstrate your skills.
- Think broadly about the impression your interests might give about your professionalism when selecting what to include. Does a future employer need to know about your obsession with *The Real Housewives*?
- Try not to repeat topics that are already well-addressed on your resume (*e.g.*, if you were a Division I swimmer in college and have this in your Education section, it might not add much to list "swimming" as an interest). This is also not the place to list your legal interests, such as "intellectual property law."
- When looking holistically at what you include, try to list interests that are not all in the same category. For example, while your top interests might actually be "hiking, backpacking and camping in the Sierras" or "Crossfit, Olympic weight lifting, and fitness" it might be more helpful to show a well-rounded list, such as "hiking in the Sierras, pub trivia, and Duke basketball" or "Visiting National Parks, reading biographies, and waterskiing."
- Last, be sure your interests are genuine! Don't try to "game" the system by listing an interest you think employers would like to see. There's no need to pretend you like an activity or embellish an interest in a particular team sport or popular TV show. As with the rest of your resume, honesty is key.

*Do I need to include an Interests section?*

While it's not mandatory to include an Interests section, many employers note that this is a part of the resume they like seeing to help get to know a candidate. It is fairly common to include for private sector focused resumes — especially for BigLaw. On the PI/PS side, an Interests section is also well-received, though less expected. In any case, we recommend you discuss whether to include Interests, and review what you plan to list, with a CDO attorney counselor to make sure you are striking the right tone on your resume given your job targets.

To help you draft your Interests section, some common interests and more specific variations are listed below. These are only a few slim examples, so don't feel limited to these topics. Be creative within the guidelines to show off who you are for potential employers!

<b>Generic:</b>	<b>More Specific:</b>
Sports Fitness	Minnesota Vikings fan* Duke basketball* Tennis (10+ years playing, certified coach) Soccer (attended 4 World Cups) Skiing the Alps
Travel or International Travel	Eco-travel through Central America Have traveled to all 50 states Backpacking through East Asia Cross-country road trips
Hiking Cycling	Urban hikes in the Bay Area Backpacking in the Canadian Rockies Climbing 14ers Tour de France
Reading	Russian Literature Reading biographies
Foodie Cooking	NYC pizza* San Francisco food trucks* Cooking Asian fusion cuisine Craft beer brewing
Reality TV Movies Podcasts	[Name specific tv show] Film Noir Sci-Fi films Avid Lord of the Rings fan Pod Save the World
Art	Portrait photography Oil painting Exploring Wynwood Art District*

\*Note: These can also show geographic connections if you are trying to further establish ties to an area!

Questions? Contact a CDO attorney-counselor or email the CDO main office at [career@law.berkeley.edu](mailto:career@law.berkeley.edu).