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Application, Interview and Recruitment Tips



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Career Days, Receptions and Coffee Chats

- Do some advance research.
- Ask questions that demonstrate interest in the firm, “I see on your website that...”
- Dress appropriately; business casual is fine, but no jeans/t-shirts.
- Predetermine which firms you will visit (the time goes by quickly and you don’t want to miss firms you have a strong interest in).
- Visit Career Day tables alone rather than in a group.
- Make sure your name tag is visible and accurate at events.
- Collect business cards and follow up.
- Try to share information that will identify you when you send a follow-up email.
- When sending follow-up emails refer to your discussion to jog the firm representative’s memory of who you are.
- Maintain eye contact.
- Remember your manners, avoid interrupting your peers.
- Be yourself.

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What Are Firms Looking For?

- Solid academics.
- Demonstrated skills: leadership, team player, commitment.
- Enthusiasm.
- Motivation.
- Work experience (not necessarily law).
- Business sense.
- Varied activities and interests.
- Ability to juggle assignments.

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Grades

- Grades are not the “be all and end all”.
- Grades are often the first screen.
- Most firms seek well-rounded individuals.
- Interests and school involvement are also key considerations.

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Research/Preparation Strategies

- Get organized – do your research!
 - NALP website: www.nalp.org
 - Firm websites
- Speak with 2nd and 3rd years, particularly those who have summered at firms you are interested in. Reach out to current articling students.
- Speak with alumni at the firm (detailed profiles are usually on websites).
- Take advantage of firm visits/open houses.
- Be mindful of the Law Society of Alberta black-out period.
- Attend school interview seminars and networking receptions.
- Join LinkedIn and establish a profile -- remember firms may well access it so consider best photo to use.
- Review your public profiles such as Instagram, Facebook and Twitter to ensure all content is appropriate.

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Cover Letters (see formula on next page)

- First piece of work for firm. Avoid making it the last.
- Demonstrate interest by referring to firm-specific research.
- Mention prior interactions with firm members.
- Indicate your school, year and type of position you are seeking (i.e. summer or articling).
- Indicate areas of interest (if you have any, but don't worry if you don't).
- Always have someone else read over the final version of your cover letter.

Dos

- Keep presentation simple.
- Include permanent and sessional address(es).
- Most firms accept applications electronically. Where possible, sign your letter.
- Submit your application as early as possible.

Don'ts

- Use flashy paper.
- Attach writing samples, discs, etc.
- Address the letter to "Chair" or "Hiring Committee" – personalize it instead.

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Cover Letters – Formula

- Review samples.
- Paragraph 1 – Link to firm
 - Who you met, what you know, firm-specific research.
- Paragraph 2 – Previous Experience
 - What you learned and how you can apply it to what the firm is looking for.
- Paragraph 3 (if necessary) – Explain Any Concerns
 - Gaps in resumé.
 - Commitment to Calgary: If from out of province, don't just state you want to work in Calgary because of the oil and gas industry - think about why you really want to work here and convey that message.
- Grades (not recommended for cover letter)
 - However, if you have a grade/year that is exceptionally anomalous, explain the circumstances in your cover letter, or as a separate page on top of your grade packages.

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Résumé Preparation

- Review Fasken's "Application Tips".
- Triple check names and your phone number.
- Review samples.
- Transcripts - include with your application (an unofficial transcript is fine, if the official transcript is not yet available). Subsequent submission may cause you to miss an opportunity if your résumé has already been reviewed.
- If you send an "unofficial transcript", ensure that you provide ALL available information, including class median (firms know what is available).
- Legible Transcripts - look at scanned materials to ensure they are legible. Note: some transcripts have shading in the background which does not print well.
- Ensure your application is complete before submitting - do not submit a partial application.
- Convey transferable/relevant skills in description.

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OCI Interview Process / Etiquette

- In Calgary, OCIs are only conducted for second year summer and articling positions.
- Accept as many OCIs as you are offered.
- Firms will provide a list of selected OCI students to the school's Career Development Office ("CDO")
- OCI scheduling is handled by your CDO.
- Evaluate and rank each OCI interview as it occurs (this will make it easier for you to determine your top firms at the end of the day).
- Ask long term questions "I see you have a student CLE program, what do you have in place for associates?"
- Send OCI thank you emails. Be mindful that your email may be forwarded to others on the recruitment team (i.e. consider personalizing emails).

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In Firm Interview – Dos and Don'ts

Dos

- Make sure the firm has the correct phone number for you.
- Out-of-towners: consider booking into a hotel near the firms with which you will be interviewing (sharing the cost with another student).
- Be aware of your surroundings.
- Be courteous to the firm's staff.
- Visit the washroom before the interview.
- Tour the "+15" system before, if possible. Check elevator banks.
- Arrive early!
- Call ahead if you are delayed.
- Pay equal attention to all of your interviewers (not just the senior member).
- Be yourself.
- Take the initiative and ask to come back.

Don'ts

- Arrive with food/drink/gum.
- Take notes during the interview.
- Make inappropriate comments or jokes.
- Talk about other students negatively.

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Interview – Questions & Topics

- Have questions prepared but don't read from your notes.
- Develop questions which indicate you are interested in more than a summer position.
- Ask your interviewer about personal experience with the firm.
- Know your résumé and application.
- Develop questions which indicate you are interested in more than a summer position:
 - What type of work/level of responsibility do you give students?
 - Can you tell me about the firm's approach to education?
 - What attracted you to / keeps you with the firm?
 - What type of work do you assign to students?
- Use discretion concerning compensation/benefit issues (use NALP website).

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Strategies During Interviews

- Ability to relate to interviewer is critical.
- Make and maintain appropriate eye contact.
- Be prepared to discuss **everything** on your résumé.
- Project confidence.
- Be yourself.
- Keep an open mind.
- Interviews at the firm:
 - Meet student committee members
 - Talk with current articling students
 - Arrange a follow-up meeting
- Let firms know you are interested but don't tell more than one firm, "You are my #1 pick."

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Strategies Following Interview

- Follow-up with a relevant, personalized “thank you” email and express your interest.
- Keep in touch.
- Show interest, but avoid overselling.
- Receiving offers: You will have a window to accept an offer but let firms know as soon as you decide.
- Firms can handle rejection so don't hesitate because you feel bad for saying “no”.
- No offers? Call and ask for status. Do sooner rather than later, as a lot may change between 5:15 - 5:45 p.m. on call day.
- Be polite. Even if you are not interested in a firm, send a brief thank you.

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No Interviews?

- Ask firm to reconsider your application.
- Ask to be put on an alternate or cancellation list.

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Meals / Coffees / Receptions / Events

- Accept invitations as time permits.
- Declining invitations: do not “trade” up invitations.
- Circulate, don’t monopolize firm members or ignore other candidates.
- Meet members of the Student Committee.
- Remember basic etiquette/manners.
- Don’t drink too much.
- If you don’t see your interviewer, leave a “sorry I missed you” voicemail.
- Don’t worry if you don’t receive an invitation to a meal, coffee, reception or event.
- Note that some firms do not host dinners or host a mixture of breakfasts, coffees, lunches, dinners or a reception or other events - don’t read into what you have been invited to.

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Wardrobe

- Test drive your suit.
- Conservative colours are best.
- Get your hair cut two weeks before.
- Break in new shoes and polish them.
- Avoid colognes/perfumes.
- Carry toiletries to freshen up.

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First Year Students

- Go to Career Days and follow up with lawyers and articling students you meet.
- Get involved, join associations, participate.
- Take advantage of firm visits.
- Speak with current students who summered at the firm.
- Speak with alumni who are at the firm.
- Reach out to current articling students.

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Alternative Strategies

- If after the summer process you are still looking for summer employment consider other strategies.
- Speak with your Career Services Office to see if they have a list of alternate summer positions.
- Explore volunteer opportunities with legal clinics, community programs.
- Network, network, network.