

CHOOSE WHERE TO APPLY: FINDING A CLERKSHIP THAT IS RIGHT FOR YOU

Things to note:

- You need to be interested in the clerkship.
- You need to be able to meet the court’s hiring criteria.
- Analyze your own long range career goals as well as the strength of your application to determine which clerkship is best for you.

Court	Hiring Criteria	Career Goals	Salary
U.S. Supreme Court	<p>These clerkships are very prestigious and very difficult to obtain.</p> <p>Check the “Applying to the United States Supreme Court” section of this Guide.</p>	These clerkships will probably open almost any door.	Federal GS-11
U.S. Courts of Appeal/Circuit Courts	These clerkships are highly competitive and usually want grades in the top ½ of the top 10%. They also look for Law Review and substantial summer experience.	Extremely prestigious. They are often considered a prerequisite for law teaching jobs.	Federal GS-11
U.S. District Court	These clerkships are prestigious and competitive. Good grades (top 10% or 20%) and journal experience (typically Law Review) are usually required but the requirements vary from judge to judge.	These trial court clerkships are invaluable for litigation training. Many of the district judges have excellent reputations, and can be a boost to your career if you are interested in litigating.	Federal GS-11
U.S. Bankruptcy Court	Same as U.S. District Courts, however, an application which shows a strong interest in bankruptcy will give you an edge.	An excellent place to gain the expertise and create the networking contacts needed to pursue a career in bankruptcy.	Federal GS-11
Federal Courts with specialized subject-matter jurisdiction	Same as U.S. District Courts, however, an application which shows a strong interest in the subject matter will give you an edge.	As with the Bankruptcy Courts, you will gain experience in a specialized area.	Federal GS-11
State Supreme Court	These clerkships are prestigious and competitive. Good grades (typically top 10%) and journal experience (typically Law Review) are usually required but the requirements vary from judge to judge.	Excellent opportunity to develop research and writing skills. Are well regarded, particularly within the state.	Probably \$40k’s or \$50k’s.

State Appellate Court	One positive element of state appellate clerkships is that they are not usually as competitive as the state supreme court clerkships. Grade range is typically top 30% and up. Journal experience is highly regarded, but requirements vary from judge to judge.	Excellent opportunity to develop research and writing skills. Are well regarded, particularly within the state.	Probably \$40k's or \$50k's.
State District/Superior Court	Requirements are all over the map. Grades are often not a major factor, but evidence of good research and writing skills, solid summer experiences and good communication skills are important.	Excellent hands on training, particularly if you are interested in litigation. Trial courts have a different feel than appellate courts: faster pace, less formal, less emphasis on writing style, more contact with the public and with local practitioners. Are well-regarded among the "where-the-rubber-meets-the-road" litigators in the local jurisdiction.	Probably \$40k's or \$50k's, but some can be as low as \$30k's or as high as \$60k's.

DETERMINE THE HIRING PROCESS FOR YOUR SELECTED COURTS

To learn more about the specific hiring procedures for your select clerkships check:

Online System for Clerkship Application and Review (OSCAR)

<https://oscar.uscourts.gov/>

- The granddaddy of them all - OSCAR not only contains information about who is hiring, it actually takes and processes the applications, much like the Symplicity system. Recommenders can upload and merge letters in the system as well.

Northwest Consortium Judicial Clerkship Database (Federal & State)

http://www.law2.byu.edu/page/index.php?id=current_students&cat=careers&content=rocky

- The law schools in Washington, Oregon, Idaho, Utah and Arizona survey judges regarding their judicial clerkships and the data is entered into the NW Consortium Database, hosted by BYU. The Database contains information about both federal and state clerkships, largely in the west/rocky mountain region.

Username: consortium; Password: supremecourt

Symplicity System Judicial Clerkship Component (Federal)

<https://law-byu-csm.symplicity.com/>

- Since Symplicity is also the creator of OSCAR they are tapped into the Administrative Office of the Federal Courts. Hence we receive an "address update" every quarter for the Federal Judges. You can access this information by going to the Symplicity Site. The feature allows you to download Excel lists of judges with various details. In addition, it tells you how judges are taking applications (i.e. OSCAR, hardcopy, email, etc.)

Vermont's Guide to State Judicial Clerkship Procedures (State)

<http://forms.vermontlaw.edu/career/guides>

- Provides information about all 50 states' application procedures for their state-level judicial clerkships.

Username: green; Password: mountains

APPLICATION MATERIALS

1. What to Send

- Unless otherwise indicated, you should send: resume, cover letter, transcript, writing sample, and 2-3 letters of recommendation
- Writing Sample
 - 5-10 pages, take an excerpt out of something longer if you need to
 - Be sure it demonstrates your analytical abilities
 - A real-world memo or persuasive brief is best
 - Be sure the work is your own and has not been edited by someone else, particularly if the judge requests an "unedited sample"
- Letters of Recommendation
 - Recommenders should be law professors and legal employers
 - OSCAR
 - Your recommender can upload/merge right into the OSCAR system
 - You should work closely with recommender and his/her administrative assistant
 - Hardcopies
 - What if you need 100 + letters? Provide a list with addresses in an Excel spreadsheet so your recommender's administrative assistant can just merge them with a form letter. Again, be sure to work closely with your recommender and their assistant
 - It is better if the recommender knows you and can speak about your work in specific detail
 - If you are truly interested in a clerkship, you should make an effort to TA/RA for a professor your 1L summer or 2L year, before you need the letters

Everything must be impeccably proofread. With so many high quality applicants, typos and other small mistakes will automatically result in your application going into the trash. One judge indicated that 30% of the applications he receives are tossed away because of errors, including: typos, mistakes in the judge's title (i.e. "justice" instead of "judge"), abbreviations and incorrectly naming the court.

STRATEGIES THAT CAN HELP YOU GET A CLERKSHIP

- Start early, particularly in developing working relationships with professors that can write you a letter of recommendation. Also, be sure and put your application materials together well in advance, rather than at the last minute.
- Grades and co-curricular activities. Academic honors and achievements are some of the

major factors judges look at when making hiring decisions.

- Extern for the judge or court where you want to work. Be warned: some judges, as a matter of policy, will not hire their externs as clerks.
- Network with visiting judges or adjunct professors that are judges.
- Leverage yourself to a second clerkship. If you don't receive an offer at the court where you want to work, accept an offer from a judge at another court level and reapply for the following year to the judges who were your original top choices.
- Apply to a senior judge. The judge's senior status may reduce competition for these clerkships.

WHEN TO APPLY

Knowing when to apply for a clerkship can be tricky. State appellate and supreme courts typically hire during the 2L summer (just before the 3L year). State trial courts usually hire during the 3L year. The federal appellate courts agreed to a "Law Clerk Hiring Plan". In theory, they have essentially decided to wait until a candidate's third year of law school before interviewing them. Critical dates are as follows:

Event	Fall 2010
First date when applications may be received/accessed by judges	12:00 pm noon (EDT) Tuesday, September 4, 2012
First date when Judges may contact applicants to schedule interviews	12:00 pm noon (EDT) Friday, September 7, 2012
First date on which interviews may be held and offers made	10:00 am (EDT) Thursday, September 13, 2012

There are several problems with the Federal Hiring Plan:

1) Not all the federal appellate courts agreed to honor it. Although the majority agreed, there were those who remained silent on the issue and those that objected. In addition, the original plan did not include federal district courts or any state courts.

2) There is no way to enforce the Hiring Plan. Each judge manages his or her own chambers, and determines his or her own hiring practices.

It is important to note that the OSCAR system forces the deadlines: judges cannot access the system until after the Plan's deadline. If a judge is not taking application through OSCAR, students can usually obtain hiring information from the court's actual website, the Northwest Consortium Judicial Clerkship Database, Vermont's Guide and by simply contacting chambers directly.