



MSLAW Academic Support

A Self-Assessment Checklist for Graduating Law Students

Excerpted from *Your First Year as a Lawyer* by Ursula Furi-Perry (Jist Publishing, 2010).

The following self-assessment checklist is designed to get you to think about some of the factors you'll have to weigh when deciding what types of jobs to seek as a new grad. Use it as a guide to determine your preferences, skills, aptitudes, needs, goals, and other considerations that matter to you. There are no right or wrong answers to these questions—the questions are simply designed to help you begin thinking about what's important to you in your first position.



Section 1: Your Skills and Aptitudes

What were some of the law school courses in which you did well?

What practical, clinical, on-the-job or internship experience do you have to offer a legal employer?

What life experiences do you have that may help you perform well on the job as a new attorney?

What are some compliments about your performance that you've received from employers, supervisors, colleagues or professors?

What are some critiques or criticisms about your performance that you've received from employers, supervisors, colleagues or professors?

What are some of your most marketable skills—in other words, what skills do you have to offer a potential employer?

What parts of your legal education have proven to be the most challenging for you?

What parts of your legal education have proven to be the most rewarding?

What makes you stand out from other job applicants?

In what ways do you work well with others, and what are some past examples where you successfully collaborated with others?

What do you consider your greatest success(es) in your legal education or experience?

What do you have to offer to a potential employer?

Section 2: Your Interests

On the job or in school, what are some of the tasks that you look forward to doing?

What are some of the tasks that you dread?

If you have legal experience, what substantive areas or subjects do you most enjoy?

What substantive legal courses did you most enjoy in law school?

What areas of the law do you see yourself practicing in?

What areas of the law would you not consider practicing in?

Go back to basics: what made you go to law school and choose the legal profession?

What are some of your interests outside of the law?

Section 3: Your Future Goals

Where would you like your career to be in:

1 year:

5 years:

10 years:

What are some things you'd like to accomplish in your career?

You're reading your "career obituary." What does it say?

What are some personal goals you'd like to accomplish?

Section 4: Your Current Needs and Practical Considerations

After looking at your monthly budget, what is the minimum salary that you'll need to support yourself?

What is your ideal salary?

Besides your salary, what other benefits do you need or desire?

Do you have any scheduling or timing issues that would limit you to working only a certain set schedule?

To what extent does the location of your employer matter to you—do you need or want to live in a certain place, or are you comfortable with relocating?

What other practical factors do you need to consider before taking a job?

Section 5: Your Potential Employers

In what type of work environment do you work best—for example, do you thrive at a large employer or school where many others work, or do you prefer a smaller workplace where you have few coworkers?

Are you interested in practicing law—and if so, would you prefer to practice in a private setting, government or nonprofit employment?

Are you interested in an alternative legal career or a non-legal position?

To what extent are the following factors important to you (rate them on a scale of 1 through 10, with 1 being not at all important and 10 being extremely important):

Employer diversity: _____

Associate retention: _____

Associate training and professional development: _____

Meaningful work assignments: _____

Being challenged on the job: _____

Finding a mentor: _____

Work-life balance: _____

Pay: _____

Contributing to the greater good on the job: _____

What does the “right fit” mean to you?

Self-Assessment Results

Now that you've spent considerable time assessing your strengths, weaknesses, needs and goals, take some time to mull over the data you've just assembled. What do your answers indicate? What does your test tell you about the potential sources of employment that may be right for you? Ask yourself the following questions:

- **Work environments:** Do my answers indicate a clear preference for any particular work environment, such as large firms, small firms, government employment, or public interest work?
- **Practice areas:** Do my answers indicate a clear preference for any particular practice area(s)?
- **Other careers:** Do my answers indicate a clear preference for any alternative legal careers or even non-legal careers?
- **Jobs to steer clear from:** Do my answers indicate any particular types of jobs to stay away from?
- **Jobs for which I may be a good fit:** Do my answers indicate any marketable skills that would transfer well into a particular position?
- **Jobs for which I may not be a good fit:** Do my answers indicate any personal or professional weaknesses that may cause me not to perform well at a particular job?