



U.S. NAVY JAG CORPS INTERNSHIP / EXTERNSHIP PROGRAM

Current as of: January 2026

Tips and Recommendations for Applicants

Purpose. These tips and recommendations were compiled from multiple years of intern and extern application cycles, feedback from applicants, input from Selection Board members, and common errors or issues observed during application reviews. Each applicant is responsible for his or her own submission, so the guidance below is provided as recommendations only.

Photo

- Your photo must be recent (taken within the last *6 months*). Confirmation of the date it was taken will be requested.
- Your photo must be full-length (head to toe) and show you wearing professional attire.
- Your photo should be well-lit, with a plain, distraction-free background (blank wall preferred).
- The photo does NOT need to be professionally taken—you may use your phone or personal camera—but it must look professional.
- The board uses the photo to assess your physical fitness, professionalism, attention to detail, and ability to follow directions. Ensure your photo and its content send the right message as you are applying to be a Naval Officer.

Resume

- Your resume should be clean, clear, and professional. Avoid graphics and large text blocks.
- Keep your resume no longer than 2 pages.
- Highlight your most significant academic, professional, and personal achievements. The board values well-rounded excellence.
- If your resume references uncommon terms, programs, or acronyms, briefly define or explain them. Do not assume reviewers are familiar with your background.
- Make sure your contact information is included on your resume. If you list it only within the written application, it may be misread.

Academics

- Upload copies of your college and law school transcripts, even if they display an “unofficial” watermark.
- Do not send electronic or mailed transcripts to the Office of the Judge Advocate General, as they may expire by the time the Selection Board convenes, or may be lost in the mail. Only documents attached to your online submission are reviewed.
- If your school or program has unique features or policies, note them in your personal statement or additional comment section.

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Employment

- Include all relevant work experience—full-time, part-time, or volunteer—to demonstrate how you balance competing priorities and manage responsibility, both essential traits of effective Naval Officers. Information about current or past employment, including part-time jobs, provides valuable context for a thorough and holistic review of each applicant.

Extracurricular Activities, Community Service, and Civic Engagements

- Navy judge advocates are officers, leaders, and warfighters—not just attorneys.
- Highlight any leadership roles, teamwork experiences, or impactful service activities beyond school and work.
- The board values evidence of public service and community involvement. Be specific about how you make an impact—whether on your campus, in your neighborhood, city, or professional community.
- Provide meaningful, targeted examples rather than lengthy lists. Avoid filler content that lacks substance.

Personal Statement

- The best personal statements are those that make a connection with the board members and help the board understand who you are as a person.
- Keep it to 500 words maximum—longer statements may be excluded or cut off during the application review process.
- Broad declarations of patriotism or desire to serve are less persuasive than a personal, well-crafted narrative linking your experiences.
- Successful applicants use the personal statement to fill in the blanks of their application, or to provide a better explanation of their application materials.
- Strong personal statements are those built on genuine and honest articulation of the applicant and their life, background, and experiences. Whether it involves beliefs, values, family, interest, experiences, or dreams, a personal statement opens the door to truly see who the applicant is behind all the paperwork.
- Use of AI is prohibited, and board members are trained to recognize AI-generated writing.

Motivational Statement

- A motivational statement differs from a personal statement in that it addresses key questions: “Why the Navy? And why the Navy JAG Corps?”
- Keep it to 250 words or fewer.
- The best motivational statements are those that connect with the board members using authentic details, sincere beliefs, and core aspects of who you are. They provide the critical link for the board to understand your potential interest in becoming a Naval Officer, a leader in the U.S. Navy and a member of the Navy JAG Corps rather than any other job, service, or calling.
- The strongest statements demonstrate genuine interest and self-awareness.
- Remember, all Navy JAGs are Naval Officers first—address why you would want to intern or extern in the world’s most capable fleet.
- Avoid generic expressions of patriotism; focus on specific motivations and experiences.

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Explaining Adverse Information

- Use the Additional Comments section to briefly clarify issues in your record when necessary.
- Avoid overexplaining minor matters that draw unwanted attention. Everyone makes mistakes—growth through those experiences can demonstrate resilience and maturity. For instance, Admiral Chester Nimitz’s early setbacks did not prevent his historic leadership.
- No single adverse entry automatically disqualifies you. Some issues (e.g., past drug use or minor offenses) may be eligible for waiver consideration.
- Be truthful and thorough. The background check and security clearance process will verify your statements. Inconsistencies or omissions can disqualify applicants regardless of merit.
- Ensure consistency across all submitted materials.

Letters of Recommendation

- Submit between 3 and 5 letters of recommendation. More than 5 letters will not be accepted and applicants who submit fewer than 3 letters are generally not selected or considered.
- Choose your recommenders wisely—letters from friends, relatives, or professors who have not been able to observe your performance in a professional or leadership setting are usually not helpful.
- Ensure your letters cover any significant legal experience and give a full picture of you as a legal professional, community leader, teammate, or strong person of moral character.
- Strong and effective letters of recommendation are diverse in viewpoint about the applicant, contain detailed accounts or incidents which support their recommendation, avoid generalized language, and focus on qualities that translate well to becoming a Naval Officer.
- Mailed or emailed recommendation letters will NOT be accepted/considered. Letters of recommendation must be uploaded into the online application. Should your recommender not allow their letter to be sent to you, they may submit the letter to NavyJAGAccessions@us.navy.mil.
- Don’t forget to ensure the recommender signs the letter and includes contact information in case the board has any questions or wishes to speak directly with the reference.

General Comments

- Apply as early as possible in your 1L year—and reapply if not selected the first time. Persistence is viewed positively.
- If reapplying, update all documents before resubmission.
- You may edit and re-upload materials until the deadline. However, only saved and signed applications will be reviewed. Unsaved changes will not be accepted once the cycle closes.

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Stay Up to Date. Visit the U.S. Navy JAG Corps careers website for detailed information and instructions visit: <https://www.jag.navy.mil/careers/lawyers/>.

Questions. If you have additional questions after reviewing this information, please contact us at NavyJAGAccessions@us.navy.mil.