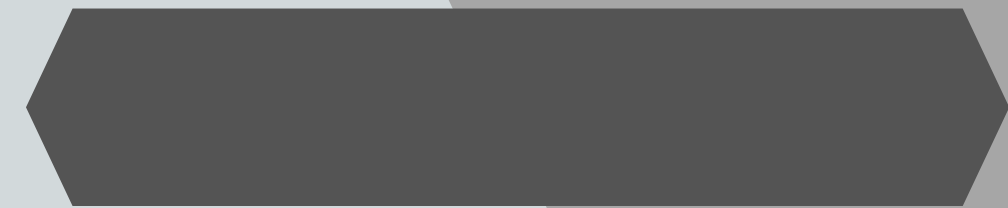
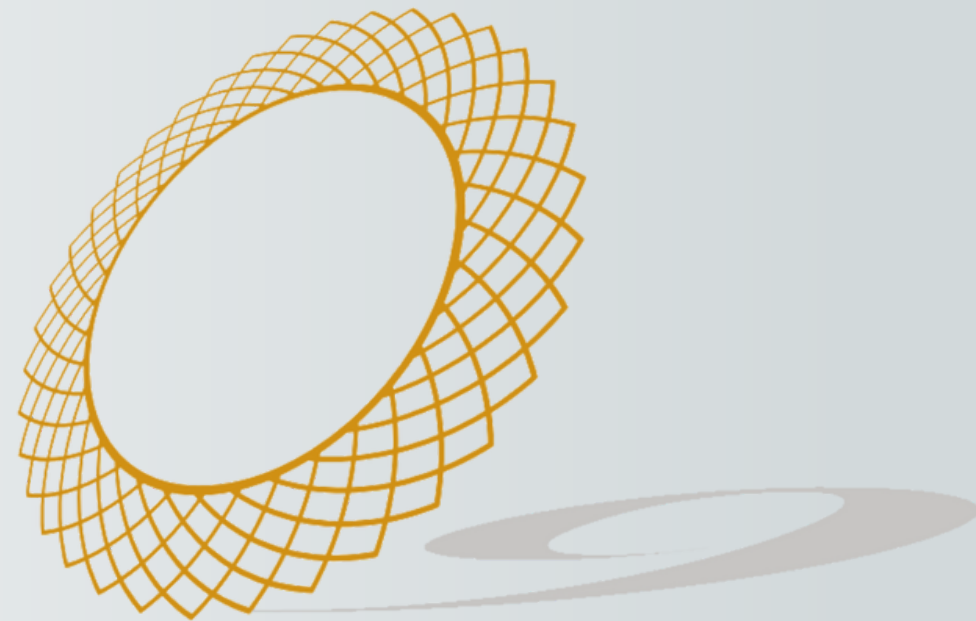


**WHEN THERE  
ARE NINE** EST. 2020

# CLERKSHIP APPLICATIONS

## Tips



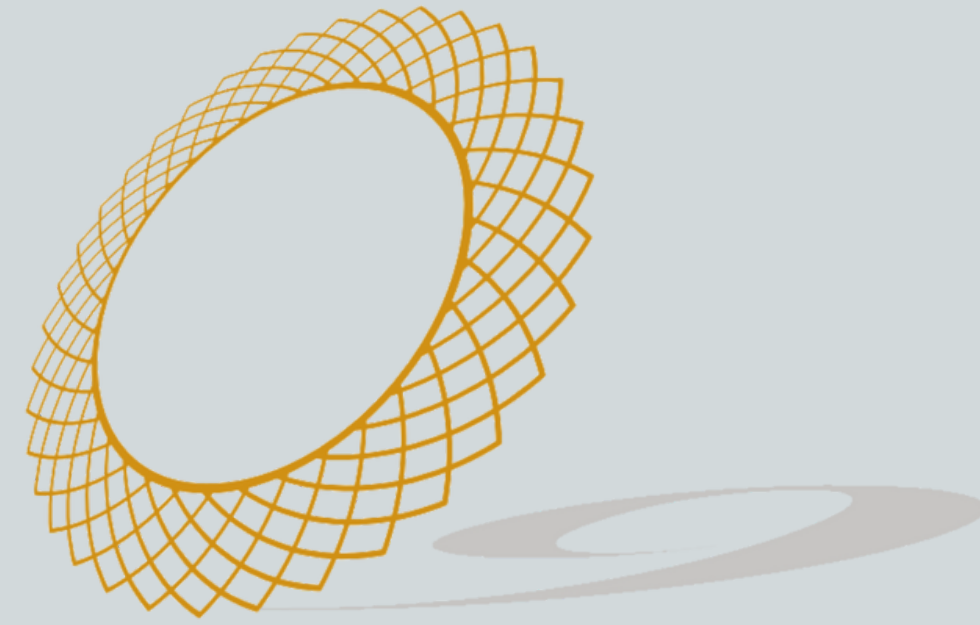
# I. CLERKSHIP APPLICATIONS

A clerkship can enormously benefit your future career opportunities – particularly if you are focusing on litigation or if you are considering going into government work. There is a wide range of clerkship experience to be had, beginning with the type of court you may choose to apply to. Law students should consider the relative advantages and disadvantages of clerking for different types of courts, such as federal vs. state, trial vs. appellate, among other options.

# TYPE OF CLERKSHIP APPLICATIONS

## State vs. Federal

- Federal clerkships are generally thought to be more competitive and more prestigious; however, state clerkships may be especially advantageous for students wishing to practice in the state of their clerkship. In fact, students with strong geographical ties to the jurisdiction likely have an advantage in applying to state clerkships.



WHEN THERE  
EST. ARE NINE 2020



# TYPE OF CLERKSHIP APPLICATIONS

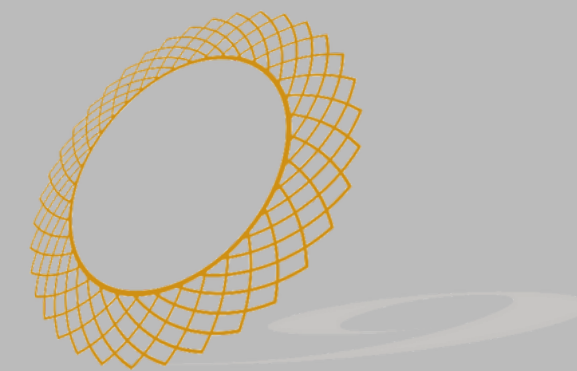
CONT'D

## o Trial Court vs. Appellate Court

- If you want to be an appellate litigator, an appellate clerkship is a practical, if not explicit, requirement.
- District/trial court clerkships can be more dynamic as clerks may assist with docket management, at hearings and trials, and communicate directly with parties and counsel.
- Clerks at the appellate level work mostly with their co-clerks, their judge, and perhaps the clerks of other judges.
- Clerks at both levels do extensive legal research and writing.
- Many applicants find that a trial court clerkship assists them in obtaining an appellate court clerkship, but this not always the case.

# TYPE OF CLERKSHIP APPLICATIONS

CONT'D



WHEN THERE  
EST. ARE NINE 2020  
SCHOLARSHIP PROJECT

## o Specialty Courts

- Some non-Article III judges take on law clerks; these include bankruptcy judges and administrative law judges. You also may have the opportunity to clerk at the U.S. Court of International Trade or for an international tribunal. These clerkships are likely to be highly valued by the parts of the legal community practicing that type of law. If you have no interest in that type of law, the clerkship could be less valuable.

## o Magistrate Judges

- Magistrate judges work in federal district court but are not Article III judges and only receive cases by referral. These judges may not have as many trials and may be more focused on specific parts of litigation like discovery or settlement conferences. But the experience will still give you wide exposure to litigation. Clerking for a magistrate judge can also increase your chances of obtaining a district court clerkship.



# APPLICATIONS

## Applications:

- Apply early, widely, and often.
- For Federal clerkships, many judges follow “the Plan” and will only accept applications from law students after their 2L year via OSCAR. However, nonfederal and many federal judges do not follow the Plan.
- You should begin research into clerkships as early in your law school career as is workable. Identify judges you may want to clerk for who do not follow the Plan and send in direct applications as soon as the judge will accept them.
- For federal judges who do follow the Plan, complete your applications before applications are released to chambers in mid-June after your 2L year.
- Keep track of newly appointed judges who may be recruiting at unusual times.
- Monitor OSCAR for newly available applications.
- If you have the opportunity to write a cover letter, be sure to mention anything you have in common with the judge or any reason that you are particularly interested in working with that judge or in that court.



**WHEN THERE  
EST. ARE NINE 2020**



### **Applications cont'd:**

- Apply as broadly as possible.
- You may be tempted to apply for clerkships only in your current city or state of residence, or a few other major metropolitan areas. Cities like New York, Washington, D.C., and Chicago are extremely competitive markets for clerkship applicants. If you apply exclusively in these areas, your chances of obtaining a clerkship are significantly reduced. Send applications to judges all over the country. Try to remain open to living anywhere—it is only for a year or two and can be an eye-opening experience.
- Geographic relocation is a difficult aspect of clerkship applications and can be more challenging for students who have family responsibilities or are caretakers. Nonetheless, it is a reality of which you should be aware.
- If you apply to clerkships in your local area or an area to which you have a connection, make sure to highlight your geographic connection in your cover letter.
- Adhere closely to the judge's application requirements. Many judges do not have unique requirements for the applicants, but many others do and will not consider applications that do not meet those requirements.
- Don't hesitate to update your applications if you get a new internship or award, or if your GPA goes up.

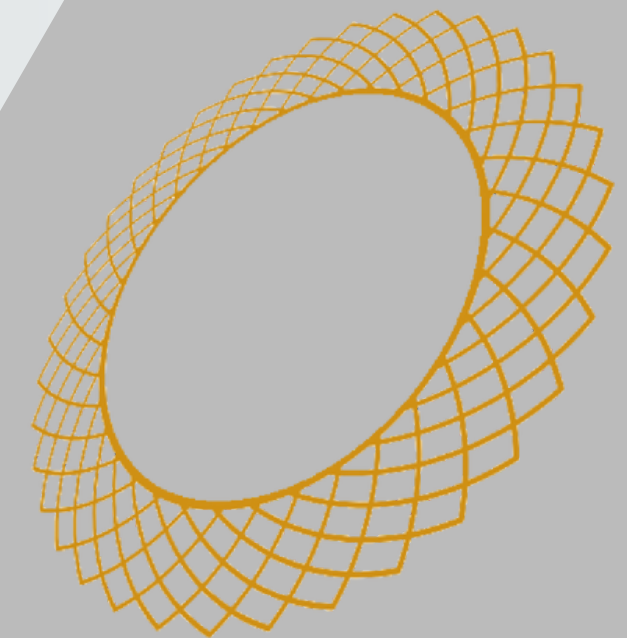


**WHEN THERE**  
**EST. ARE NINE 2020**

---

### **Recruit the assistance of connections and professors:**

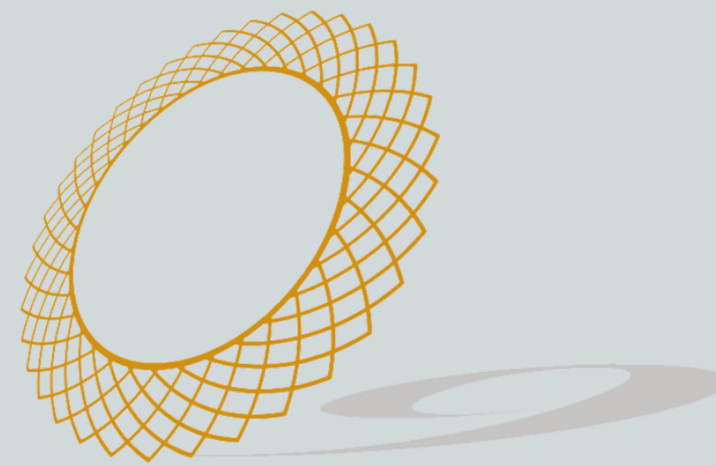
- If you know a judge or know someone who knows a judge, do not hesitate to reach out about clerkship opportunities.
- Form connections with professors who are former clerks and/or sit on your school's clerkship committee. Ask for their advice about who to apply to and what to include in your application. They may be willing to review and provide feedback on your writing sample. As appropriate, keep them apprised of where you have applied and ask them to call chambers to recommend you, even if they have already written you a recommendation letter. They may also have connections or personal relationships.
- Identify former clerks in your network, including professors, whose judges are still on the bench. Reach out to ask about their experience and for advice regarding applications, and where appropriate, ask if they would consider recommending you to their judge.
- Many judges teach law school classes. Getting to know a judge as your professor is a great opportunity to demonstrate your talents and gain an ally who can recommend you to fellow judges, or possibly invite you to apply for a clerkship in their chambers.
- Interning for a judge during law school is another great way to create a clerkship opportunity. Many judges have a policy of not hiring their interns as law clerks but they will recommend you to fellow judges if you distinguish yourself.
- The clerkship application process can be grueling and discouraging. Try to find an established attorney or professional with clerkship experience who is willing to be your champion.



**WHEN THERE  
ARE NINE** 2020  
SCHOLARSHIP PROJECT



# POST-LAW SCHOOL CLERKSHIP APPLICATIONS



WHEN THERE  
EST. ARE NINE 2020

- If you have not applied for a clerkship during your 2L year, all is not lost. Many judges look favorably on applications from 3Ls or law school graduates and a number of judges actually require their clerks to have post-law school work experience. You will have to work this out with a prospective employer; many, though not all, law firms are very accommodating of clerkships, particularly federal clerkships.
- There are a few advantages to applying for a clerkship once you have started working: you may get to know law firm partners or other senior attorneys who know judges and can recommend you. Having represented clients can enrich your clerkship experience and make you a better clerk. And if you are thinking of only spending a few years at a law firm, clerking can provide you with a graceful exit from the firm and will create a new opportunity to interview for post-clerkship jobs.

# OTHER ADVICE

- Unlike a law firm, clerking for a judge is a very personal experience. You will be devoting all of your efforts to one person, so demonstrating your ability to work well with the judge is key to obtaining and succeeding in the clerkship.
- The singularity of the clerkship is also a reason to take feedback on the judge into consideration. While rumor and conjecture are not helpful, credible reports that a judge is a difficult boss should factor into your application decisions.
- In the best of circumstances, the judge you clerk for can be an important mentor throughout your career.



**WHEN THERE  
ARE NINE** EST. 2020