

Vermont Law School
J.D. Externship Program
Clio Timekeeping Instructions

As part of the coursework for your externship, we ask you to keep track of your “billable” time spent doing “legal tasks,” and your “total time” spent on-site, for each week of your externship. We use an online practice management tool called Clio for your “billable” work, and a Microsoft form (the “Total Hours” form) for your “total time.” You will find the link to the Total Hours form in the online course. You can access Clio either through a browser (go to <https://app.clio.com>) or through the Clio mobile app, which is available for both Android and Apple operating systems. To login to Clio, use your VLS email address and “TimeKeep” as the password. Make sure you change your password the first time you log in.

Below are basic instructions on entering your time, using the Clio site (in a browser) to record your time, and exporting your time entries into timesheets that you will upload weekly during the 15 weeks of the semester. Instructions for entering time into the Clio mobile app are not included here, but you are welcome to explore the software through your mobile device and enter time that way if you prefer. The functions and navigation are largely the same, but you cannot pull a timesheet from the mobile app. For that, you will need to use Clio in a browser.

If you have any difficulty with or questions about the mechanics of Clio, entering time into Clio, or pulling a timesheet from Clio, please contact Professor Nicole Killoran at nakilloran@vermontlaw.edu.

Entering Time in Clio Using a Browser:

To enter your time in Clio using the browser, first navigate to the website (app.clio.com) and login. You will land on the “Dashboard.”

From here you can either start a time clock (in the top bar) to track time spent on an activity in real time using the Timekeeper function, or you can make manual time entries in one of two ways.

You can use the Activities page (link in menu bar on left), and from that screen click on the “New time entry” button (top right).

You can also navigate to your specific matter by clicking on the Matters page (link in menu bar on left), clicking on your matter, clicking on the Activities tab in your matter, and then clicking on “New time entry.”

Information for Time Entries:

In Clio, you will need to input the following information for every time entry that you make during the semester:

- **Matter:** We have created a matter for your time entries (your “Billable” matter). If you are entering time with the Timekeeper or through the Activities screen, look up your matter by typing your first or last name into the matter box. The system will display your matter. If you instead first navigate to your matter through the Matters screen, and then to the Activities tab under your matter, you can skip this step.
- **Date:** Make sure you input the correct date for the time entry you are recording, especially if you are entering your time on a different day.
- **Activity Description:** For your time entries, choose from one of the activity descriptions, or use the “other” description. For part-time students entering coursework, select the “Coursework” activity description.
- **Duration:** The length of time you spent on a particular activity, rounded up to the nearest tenth of an hour. See the examples below under “Time Formats.”
- **Note:** Use this box to note with a short description what project you are working on. **To protect client confidentiality, do not provide the actual name of the client, docket number, internal file number, or any other identifying details in the Note box.** Your descriptions in the Note box should be short and should not contain project or client details to protect client confidentiality (e.g., Assignment #1, research on bankruptcy lease issue, or estate planning matter).

Time Formats

When you enter time in Clio, you can use a rational number (e.g., a number with decimal digits) format or an hour and minute format. So, for example, you can enter an activity that took one hour and ten minutes as:

- 1 h 10 m
- 1:10
- 70min or
- 1.2

Activity Descriptions

We have created a number of pre-set “billable” activity descriptions for you to choose from. These descriptions reflect many common billable activities we expect you may engage in during your externship. If you do not see an activity description you need, use the “Other” activity.

“Billable” Time Entries

The activities you will record in your “Billable” matter will be separate entries for the strictly legal tasks you perform during the day. “Billable” tasks are those that add value to a client’s cause, advancing the matter in one way or another or at least attempting to do so. For a more detailed description of what we expect you to record as “Billable” time entries, and why this is an important skill to learn, please review the Timekeeping module in Orientation. If you would like to play with the “non-billable” feature in Clio, feel free to do so.

Creating a Timesheet

To export your time entries into a timesheet, we recommend that you use the Activities tab under your specific matter. You will then “filter” the dates you want, and “export” the entries for these dates into a separate document. Take the following steps:

- Navigate to the Matters page and click on the matter for which you want to create a timesheet.
- Specify the date range for the time entries you want to pull.
- Click the “Export” button near the center/bottom of the Activities list. Select “PDF” as the export format and click on the “Export” button.
- You can also, if you prefer, use the Activities page, and the “Filters” button near the top right of your time entries and click on the “Filters” button near the top right of the page.

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The Why and How of Timekeeping During Your Semester in Practice

Why is timekeeping important?

Until relatively recently, timekeeping was considered to be a requirement only in private practice. Many students embarking on their SiP wonder, rightfully, why this seemingly burdensome requirement applies to their externship in public interest and government organizations.

Today a timekeeping requirement has moved into almost every practice setting in which externship students work. Lawyers in state Attorneys General, U.S. Attorneys, and U.S. Department of Justice offices all keep track of time for budgeting purposes; it's how they allocate resources amongst the various agency clients they serve. Some public defenders track their billable time because state restitution orders in criminal cases can and do include the reasonable value of services the public defender renders to indigent clients. NGOs have begun to require timekeeping as well, first for litigation where attorney's fees are recoverable, and now for some non-litigation purposes, including grant-funding requirements.

No matter what type of practice you enter, it is likely that timekeeping will be a part of your job. You will need to be accountable for your time, even if you spend time doing things that don't advance a client's cause. It is good to learn how to do it early on so it becomes a habit. This is not to suggest that every externship placement has an in-house timekeeping requirement. But, fair warning, it is highly unlikely you will avoid having to track your time if you engage in traditional legal work at some point during your career.

In addition to being useful for your future legal career, it is important that you track your total time on-site each week to ensure you are meeting the Semester in Practice Full-Time Work Commitment Policy. That Policy requires that you work the full-time (40+ hours) weekly work schedule of the office in which you are placed for 15 calendar weeks. Your externship professor will review your timesheets each week with an eye toward the activities you record, and will also monitor your total time on-site to ensure that you are meeting this requirement.

How do I track my time?

You will track your time each day during your externship using two methods.

You will use Clio to track your daily "billable" legal work (see explanation below) in a matter the JD Externship Program will set up for you before the semester begins. Your "Billable" matter is intended to let you track the time you spend at your externship performing "legal tasks" that add value to the client's cause. These tasks, referred to as "billable" tasks in the profession, usually advance whatever matter you're working on in one way or another, or at least are an attempt to do so. Billable tasks can include drafting documents or memos, performing research, meeting with clients, attending hearings, preparing correspondence, and other tasks that further or contribute to a matter for the client. You will log each "billable" task you perform during the week as a separate time entry in Clio, and pull a timesheet for these entries each week. If you

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wish, you may also use Clio to track “non-billable” tasks, so you can get a feel for what work a client can or should pay for, and what work cannot be charged to a client.

Because Clio is a cloud-based practice management tool, you can enter time into Clio using a browser or a phone app, and your entries will sync automatically to create a record. This enables you to track your activities in “real time,” or as you go, each day. However, if you prefer to keep notes during your day of what tasks you work on and how much time you spend on site, you can also enter your activities into Clio at the end of the day.

In addition to your “billable” time entries in Clio, you will also use a separate Microsoft form (the Total Hours form) to track your weekly externship hours. The Total Hours form link is provided in the online course. Your Total Hours for the week are the amount of time you spend at your externship site during the work week, including the total time you spend each day at your externship between when you first set foot in the office for the day, and when you left for the day.

Why track “billable” time and “total time?”

We ask you to track your “billable” time and your “total time” separately to illustrate how the reality of the dreaded and infamous concept of “billable hours” operates in the profession. Even though you might spend a full day at the office, a portion of your day is necessarily taken up by various activities that you cannot bill to a client (your “non-billable hours”). “Non-billable” time can include something as obvious as a bathroom or lunch break for which you would not expect a client to pay. It might also include attendance at organization or firm meetings, continuing legal education conferences, and training sessions. Though these activities are important for your professional development, and may even be important for the work of your organization, they may not necessarily advance a client’s cause or be something the organization can bill to a client.

As important is the fact that the time you actually spend on "legal tasks" may not ultimately be charged to a client. You are learning, and you will become more and more efficient at legal work as time goes by, but tasks such as researching, writing memos, briefs, and other "legal tasks" may take you longer than what may be appropriate to charge to a client. It is important, however, to record this time (in this externship and in practice after graduation) and log in your Clio "Billable" matter all time you spend on legal tasks, even if you think you spent far longer than others might have taken to complete the same or similar task. In practice, leave it to others with more experience to determine what portion of your time, if not all of it, is to be charged to the client.

When you enter your “legal tasks” into the “Billable” matter in Clio, and compare those totals with the time you log using the Total Hours form each week, you'll find that your total time on-site never equals the total time you spent on “legal tasks” for the day. This illustrates the reality of billable goals imposed by many private firms of something on the order of 2000 hours a year. The requirement is never 2000 hours on site.

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We suggest you talk with your supervising attorney about the discrepancies you encounter. You can learn a good deal from those conversations about how billing and tracking time works within the organization in which you are working, or about the attorney's experience with billing and tracking time in other organizations or firms for which the attorney has worked.

How do I maintain client confidentiality in my timesheets?

Even if you keep track of time within a software package at your externship, you are required to keep track of your “legal tasks” separately using Clio. This is primarily because you must ensure that no confidential information creeps into your time entries. Note how sanitized the time entries are in the sample “Billable” matter Clio timesheet provided on the Timekeeping page in Orientation. This was a nice effort by a student in a large firm, used with permission here.

Please note that your externship professor has discretion to modify timekeeping assignments throughout the semester.