

WRITING COMPELLING RESUMES & COVER LETTERS

RESUME

A. General Tips

- One-page in length, unless you have substantive and applicable work experience
- Use black ink on white or ivory bond paper (for hardcopy applications)
- Use bolding, underlining, and italics sparingly
- Leave space between paragraphs and adequate margins
- Font size should be at least 11-point, if using Times New Roman
- Recommended font styles include Times New Roman, Arial, Garamond, and Californian
- Use the same font style and formatting throughout your resume

B. Required Resume Sections

- Header, Education, and Experience

C. Optional Sections

- Skills, Associations, Interests, Licenses, Volunteer Work, Publications, Military Experience, and Language(s) (know your audience and tailor these sections to particular employer types)

D. Header

- Your name should stand out with a slightly bigger font
- Use proper abbreviation and punctuation (e.g., Rd. and Apt.)
- Make sure to list your current, correct contact information (verify its accuracy)
- Do not hyperlink your email address; use a professional email address
- Have a professional voicemail message for follow-up calls by prospective employers

E. Education

- List your law school and undergraduate school in reverse chronological order; only list your junior college or high school if you have a special reason (e.g., geographical connection)
- Do **not** round up your GPA or go out to the third decimal point
- List academic honors, journals, and competition teams (e.g., Moot Court, Mock Trial, and ADR Board) first, followed by extracurricular involvement

F. Experience

- Start each job description/duty with an active verb and be results-oriented (e.g., “Implemented marketing procedures which resulted in 5% revenue increase.”)
- Demonstrate the relationship between the job sought and your past experience

G. Tailor Your Resume

- Whether to include particular activities, organizations, or volunteer work depends on the employment sought; use discretion
- Avoid being generic; have different versions of your resume based on the employer type: Firm, Government, Corporation, or Public Interest Organization

COVER LETTER

A. The Cover Letter serves as your first “interview”

B. Address Line and Salutation:

- When using the courtesy title “Esq.,” drop the Mr./Ms. (do not use both titles)
- Use the surname only in the salutation (e.g., “Dear Mr. Jones:”; **not** “Dear Mr. Ethan Jones:”

C. Body

- Paragraph one: Hook the reader and tell him/her why you are writing (reference any personal connections)
- Do not restate your resume; discuss your qualifications, relevant/transferrable skills, and intangible qualities that you gained through your education and past experience
- Discuss the employer: Why you want to work for this particular employer?
- Do not start every sentence with “I”; diversify your sentence structure
- One space between paragraphs; one space between the end of the letter and “Sincerely”; four spaces between “Sincerely” and your typed name

D. Formatting

- Cover Letter should be one page
- Font should be no smaller than 11-point, if using Times New Roman
- Use the same header, paper, and font style as on your resume
- Add an e-signature

E. Beware!

- Proofread your final draft with fresh eyes and in hard copy
- When submitting your materials in an email, attach the cover letter and resume; do not copy the cover letter in the body of the email
- Do not use informal language, “I would love to work at your firm!”
- Do not start with “My name is...”
- Do not use contractions
- DO NOT COPY ANY SAMPLE COVER LETTERS

WRITING SAMPLE

- Start with your best LRW assignment (incorporate your professor’s comments)
- Continue to add writing samples as you work (with approval and redactions, use an assignment from your summer job) or use a writing assignment from a class
- 8-12 pages in length if no maximum length is provided; otherwise, follow the employer’s instructions
- Use a cover page which puts the writing sample in context; this is particularly important if your sample is an excerpt from a longer writing sample

To view resume and cover letter samples or our writing sample handout, please visit the “Handouts & Samples” page under “Students/Alumni Resources:” <http://www.chapman.edu/law/careers/students-alumni/handouts-documents.aspx>.