

Back to IRAC: Writing Cover Letters Like A Law School Exam

Have you ever found a great job opportunity only to be discouraged because it requires a cover letter to apply? The CSO is here to help you feel confident in your cover letter writing abilities. As with your coursework, mastering the **IRAC method (issue, rule, analysis/application, conclusion)** is essential to drafting cover letters. Here are some steps to make the body paragraphs of your cover letter stand out:

1. Issue/Rule

For purposes of a cover letter, **IR** are grouped together. The opening sentence of a body paragraph should be the issue you want to address with the employer. This is often a transferrable skill you have gained from your coursework or work experience.

Example 1: During law school, I had the opportunity to work at Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC) as a law clerk, and I was able to thoroughly research and write legal documents to better protect the environment in Los Angeles County.

Example 2: In my work as a resident advisor, I organized information for 300 students and led weekly group activities.

Example 3: My second-year of law school I took Federal Income Taxation and participated in a law student tax challenge so I could further delve into tax law.

2. Analysis/Application

The **A** is meant to be an analysis of your issue/rule sentence; it is the application of the facts to support your statement. In a cover letter, this is accomplished by providing specific examples that prove you have the skills or knowledge you previously stated.

Example 1: For example, I was charged with writing a motion to stop a large corporation from dumping waste onto a piece of property they owned. My thorough research enabled me to find the key statutory and regulatory prohibitions against this behavior, and the court granted the motion.

Example 2: To keep track of all of this information, I created an Excel database that featured each student's name, room number, extracurricular activities, and any necessary special accommodations. This database allowed me to better get to know the students, communicate with them in more meaningful ways, and stay on track with my activity goals for the year.

Example 3: The competition exposed me to advanced tax concepts, including corporate-level taxation of redemptions and taxable acquisitions. By exploring these topics, I gained a better understanding of complex tax laws and applied my research to real-life cases. Due to my preparation and diligent research, I won third place in the challenge.

3. Conclusion

Your **C** should be the last sentence of your body paragraph. The conclusion is meant to connect the dots between the skills you just presented and why it relates to this specific employer.

Example 1: I will bring this same level of legal research and writing to cases at your firm.

Example 2: As your law clerk, I would maintain this same level of organization and approach my tasks in a systematic and effective way.

Example 3: This advanced tax knowledge will provide me with a solid foundation for working at your company.

Still unsure about your cover letter? Send it to the CSO to be reviewed.