



SHEPARD BROAD LAW CENTER

Guide to Drafting Your Own Letters



A Publication of The Career Development Office
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JOB SEARCH LETTER WRITING

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I. Introduction

In General

Letter writing is not only an important part of the job search process, it is also a skill that practicing attorneys use almost every day, throughout their careers. It is critical to master the skill of letter writing as early as possible. If you have difficulty with writing grammar or style, refer to Strunk and White's The Elements of Style or Margaret Shertzer's The Elements of Grammar and other resources for writing business letters. Both books are available at local bookstores and libraries. Write simply, directly and briefly. Don't turn a job search letter into a legal document. Use short, not complex or compound, sentences. Avoid jargon, multiple negatives, and the passive voice. The ability to communicate clearly and effectively is a talent. Show that you have this talent in your letters. Check your letter several times for grammar, spelling and punctuation. A poorly written letter will be tossed away, along with your chance for that job.

Paper

Use quality paper and matching envelopes for all of your letters. It should be the same paper that you use for your resume, so that when you send a letter with your resume, together they present a neat professional package. Except for a brief 30-word thank you letter, which may be handwritten, all business correspondence should be word processed. Use a professional-looking font that matches the font used in your resume. Print your letter on a laser printer. Even if you are sending other professional materials which do not include your resume, use the same paper.

Business Formats

There are generally 3 types of business letter formats: Block Format, Modified Block Format, and Semi-Block (Indented) Format. In the Block Format, type every line of the letter (EXCEPT FOR YOUR HEADING) flush with the left margin. In a Modified Block Format, the Date, the Closing, the Signature, and the Printed Name are all indented to the right half of the page (you decide how far), and they all must line up with each other. In the Semi-Block Format, The Date, Closing, Signature, and Printed Name are all indented to the right half of the page (and they line up with each other), AND the first line of each paragraph is indented.

Envelopes and Mailing

Most quality paper comes with, or has available, matching envelopes. In most circumstances, you should use these envelopes, with the address and return address printed through your laser printer. If you are only enclosing a few sheets, such as your letter, resume, and even references, you should fold the paper into thirds for regular mailing in the envelope. If you are sending a thicker package which may include a writing sample, you should keep the pages flat and send them in a manila envelope. Regular first class mail is most appropriate for job seeking, although faxes and e-mails are gaining wider acceptance. There may be some instances, when you are very close to a deadline when overnight e-mail, or faxing is needed. You generally do not need to request a return receipt or insure your materials.

Heading

The heading of your letter contains your contact information, and must include your name, address and telephone number, at a minimum. It's also a good idea to include a fax number, if you have one, and your e-mail address. Also, your e-mail address should not have a hyperlink attached to it.

In most cases, you can copy the heading from your resume; then your documents will have a consistent look. Be sure that the telephone number you give will always be answered, either by a person or an answering machine. You won't want to miss these calls. If you have an answering machine or voice mail, make sure the message sounds professional.

Letter Writing Do's and Don'ts

DO:

- Check every letter several times for typos, grammar, spelling and punctuation.
- Ask someone else to review your letters for mistakes.
- Customize every letter you send.
- Use the active voice.

DON'T:

- Write in all caps. It's hard to read.
- Abbreviate words. Take time to spell them out.
- Use a post office box for your address. It makes you look transient.
- Overuse "I"
- Justify right margins.
- Don't send form letters. While you may develop a standard format to work from, each letter must be customized to the situation and the recipient.
- Mark an envelope or letter as "personal and confidential" unless it truly is. Job search correspondence is rarely "confidential".

II. Cover Letters

A cover letter should accompany *every* resume you send to a prospective employer, whether you are answering an advertisement or inquiring about potential openings. Cover letters provide an additional opportunity to **sell yourself** and set you apart from other candidates. On the other hand, a poorly written cover letter, or one with mistakes in grammar, spelling or punctuation, will **doom** your prospects for an interview.

Resist the temptation to send the exact same cover letter to every employer. If you **customize** your letter to demonstrate that you understand the focus and current issues of a prospective employer, you'll increase your chance to get an interview. For example, if a firm focuses on a particular area of law, has recently merged with another firm, or has received press coverage for its work with a notable client or project, demonstrate your knowledge of that fact. If possible, relate that fact to how you would make a tangible contribution to the firm.

The reader of your cover letter is more interested in *their* needs than yours. Focus on how your skills and experience will be of **benefit** to the employer. Many cover letters mistakenly focus too much on the candidate's objectives (salary, advancement, geography, etc.). If your letter says "I" too many times, redraft it to focus more on the employer's needs.

A cover letter should be limited to **one page**. Don't rehash your resume. Instead focus on the skills, training or experiences that are best suited to the position or firm to which you are applying. Also, mention items that may be of interest to the employer, but that are not mentioned in the resume.

Remember, your cover letter is your **first opportunity** to distinguish yourself from other job seekers by highlighting those experiences and interests that make you a unique applicant. Your cover letter also plays a critical role in creating an employer's sense of you as a person. Use the cover letter as an opportunity to convey more fully who you are than your resume does. Go into detail about *relevant* aspects of background, instead of reiterating information on your resume. Finally, remember that your cover letter provides a **sample of your writing** to a prospective employer. It must be perfect.

Formatting Your Cover Letter

Paper: Reproduce your cover letter on the same heavy bond paper that you used to print your resume.

Typeface and Font: Use the same typeface and 11-12 point font size for your cover letters that you used for your resume.

Length: Generally, it should be no more than 3-4 paragraphs.

Layout: A cover letter should conform to standard business formats (see *Business Formats* on page 2). The information should appear in this order:

The Heading

(This is like your own letterhead, and should be identical to that of your resume.)

[double space]

The Date

[double space]

Full Name,

Title,

Firm/Organization, and

Address of Person to whom you are writing

[double space]

The Salutation:

[double space]

The Body of the Letter (with double spaces between paragraphs)

[double space]

Sincerely, (or other Closing of your choice)

[leave four spaces - for your written signature]

Your Name - typed

[double space]

Enclosure

Writing the Cover Letter

The basic functions of the cover letter can be summarized by the three "I's":

Introduce yourself to the prospective employer
Indicate your interest and appropriateness for a specific position
Inquire about the possibility of arranging for an interview

The **first step** in composing your cover letter is to read over your resume and identify which of your experiences are the most directly pertinent to the position for which you are applying. Consider the personal strengths required by those experiences, the types of training they gave you, and the kinds of talents and skills you acquired in the course of them. **Second**, you will want to draw on information you gathered from your research of the firm or the organization. Identify the needs of the organization given its size, location, area of legal specialization, and so forth. The more you know about the prospective employer, the more effectively you can market yourself as a potentially valuable contributing member of the organization. This leads directly to the **third step** in drafting your cover letter – to express, in two or three sentences, how you could use the talents, skills and training you acquired through your previous experiences to contribute to the organization you have targeted.

Since your cover letter will provide a sample of how well you write, vary your sentence structure to keep the employer interested. In other words, do not begin every sentence with "I (verb)." The more customized your letter is, the better it will be remembered.

The 5 Parts of a Cover Letter

Though the contents will vary depending on the job search, a standard *three to four paragraph format* for cover letters is both well-recognized in the professional community and extremely effective.

1. The Heading

This is your contact information. Put your name, address, phone, fax and e-mail address at the top of the page. If a cell phone is the best way to reach you during the day, indicate that number as well. If your address changes during your job search, send another resume and cover letter with the new address, noting the reason for change in the new letter.

2. The Salutation

The cardinal rule in sending out cover letters is to address your cover letter to a specific person who will be charged with the responsibility for reading your letter. Usually, this person will be either the person responsible for the hiring in each office, or the contact you have identified or who has been identified for you. Do not address your letter to "To whom it may concern", or to "Dear Hiring Partner." The salutation in a business letter ends with a colon (:), as in "Dear Ms. Jones:". Show that you took the initiative to find out the person's name and title. If you do not have a contact person, call the personnel office and ask, or locate the name of the hiring attorney in any of several directories in the Career Development Office, or locate the name of a Nova alum currently working for the employer and address your letter to him/her.

3. Paragraph #1 – The Introduction

The first paragraph of your letter should serve to identify you (i.e., I am a first-year student at Nova Southeastern University, Shepard Broad Law Center), and should explain why you are contacting them (i.e., I am interested in a summer internship with your office). Where possible, mention who referred you to the job or how you learned about the organization, or about the specific job opening, whether it was from a friend, a previous intern, an article in the paper, a speaker on a panel, or a job posting. This is an important part of networking.

Here are some examples of introductory paragraphs:

The Basic Approach: I am presently a first year law student at Nova Southeastern University, Shepard Broad Law Center and I am writing to express my interest in an internship with [name of firm] this summer.

A Common Contact/Referral: I am a first year law student at Nova Southeastern University, Shepard Broad Law Center. Knowing of my interest in [insert type of practice area], [name of contact] suggested that I contact you with regard to the possibility of a summer internship with your firm.

A Posted Position: As a Florida native, with considerable practical experience in [insert previous experience], I feel I am an excellent candidate for the internship that you advertised in the NALP bulletin in January, 2010.

After Researching the Firm/Organization: I have read a number of articles in the Wall Street Journal about your firm's [insert]...

4. Paragraph # 2 and #3 – The Connection

The middle paragraphs should establish a logical link between you and the employer by expressing the qualities and skills you have which match the needs of the organization. Communicate informed enthusiasm for the position. You should stress those experiences which are most relevant to the position without merely regurgitating the descriptions in your resume. Focusing on how your skills fulfill the employer's needs will not only show that you recognize your own capabilities, but that you also have done research about and understand what the organization does.

5. The Final Paragraph - Inquire

The last paragraph should thank the employer for his or her time and consideration. Remind the reader of your interest in and availability for an interview. You may consider a more aggressive approach by indicating that you will follow-up within the next few weeks to discuss the possibility of arranging for a time to meet. Let out-of-town employers know if you will be in their area at some time in the near future in order to facilitate scheduling an interview. You should always include information about how the employer can contact you. Remember to mention that your resume (and any other items you are sending) is/are included.

GUIDELINES FOR A COVER LETTER
(Putting the parts together)

Your name
Your street address
City, State (2-Letter abbreviation) ZIP Code
Phone Number
e-mail (NO HYPERLINK)

Date

Individual's Name (Use "Esq." or "Mr./Ms." – Not "Mr. Jones, Esq.")
Title
Employer
Street Address
City, State (2-letter abbreviation – be consistent) ZIP Code

SALUTATION: Dear Ms. or Mr. (insert name of specific person):

FIRST PARAGRAPH: Identify yourself, the position for which you are applying, your connection to the location, how you learned about the opening (i.e. if you were referred by an individual or if you responded to a job posting).

SECOND AND THIRD PARAGRAPHS: The Sales Pitch. This section should tell a brief story that explains your background, and ends with why you are seeking work with this *particular* employer. Establish a logical link between you and the employer by indicating your interest in the position and the organization, and by explaining how your academic background and experience makes you qualified. Using meaningful specifics based on your research about the employer and its work, explain how your achievements and unique experiences make you a good candidate. This is an opportunity to highlight the skills, interests and experiences on your resume, without restating such information verbatim.

FOURTH PARAGRAPH: Request for action or promise to follow-up. Indicate your desire for an interview. Suggest alternative times and dates or indicate your flexibility. Indicate that you will be in the city where the organization is located on a certain date and that you would like to set up an interview, or indicate that you will call on a certain date to set up a meeting. Make note of any enclosures.

LAST LINE: Expression of thanks.

Sincerely,

(your handwritten signature)

Type your name

Enclosures(s): Resume, transcript, writing sample.

Cover Letter Do's and Don'ts

DO:

- Send a cover letter with every resume.
- Write with the employer's needs in mind.
- Check and double-check spelling, punctuation, grammar and typos.
- Be sure your address, phone numbers, etc. are current and correct.

DON'T:

- Rehash your name.
- Use stuff, bureaucratic jargon or technical terminology that the reader may not understand.
- Write more than one page.
- Forget to sign your letter professionally – blue or black ink, no “☺” on I's.

The following pages have sample letters representing various situations. **Do not copy these letters verbatim!** If you do, you risk having your letter look exactly like those of your fellow students and drawing negative attention when the lawyer reading it thinks, “Oh, here's that same Nova Law School form letter again,” as they throw it in the wastebasket. These are intended to be for your *guidance only* and to serve as frameworks to create your own unique, personalized letter. Be creative. And, make sure it's letter perfect!

Sample Cover Letter #1 (Block Format)

Stanley Student
123 Maple Street
Fort Lauderdale, Florida 33312
(954) 123-4567
students@nsu.law.nova.edu

August 29, 2009

Ethel Employer, Esq.
Good, Employer and Choice, P.A.
7890 Broad Street
Miami, Florida 33123

Dear Ms. Employer:

I am a third year law student at Nova Southeastern University, Shepard Broad Law Center, and will graduate in May 2010. I am very interested in the open attorney position that you listed with our Career Development Office this week.

In planning my law school curriculum, I have taken a number of courses that would prepare me to make an immediate contribution to an employment law practice, including Labor and Employment Law, Employment Discrimination, Employee Benefits, Alternative Dispute Resolution, and an Interviewing, Counseling and Negotiating Workshop. I know that strong writing skills are critical to a successful career in employment law, and I am pleased to point out that I received an award for the best brief in my Lawyering Skills course. I am interested in bringing these skills to your firm.

I welcome the opportunity to meet with you to further discuss my credentials and experience, and how I can help meet the needs of your firm. Please contact me at your convenience to schedule an interview or to ask me any questions you may have.

Thank you in advance for your time and consideration. I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Sincerely,

Stanley Student

Enclosure

Sample Cover Letter #2 (Modified Block Format)

Stanley Student
123 Maple Street
Fort Lauderdale, Florida 33312
(954) 123-4567
students@nsu.law.nova.edu

August 29, 2009

Ethel Employer, Esq.
Good, Employer and Choice, P.A.
7890 Broad Street
Miami, Florida 33123

Dear Ms. Employer:

Frank Friend suggested that I contact you, as he thought that my skills and background may be a good match with your firm. I am a third year law student at Nova Southeastern University, Shepard Broad Law Center, and will graduate in May 2006. I am seeking a permanent position after law school, but would also be available for part-time work before graduation.

I understand that your firm has recently taken on the defense of several major class action lawsuits, which will create substantial demands on the firm's resources for the next few years. I am fortunate to have gained solid experience in complex litigation while working last summer for Fighters, Scratchers and Litigators, P.A. In addition, my clinical work in law school gave me experience in interviewing witnesses, organizing documents and preparing discovery requests. I am willing to work long and hard, as evidenced by the fact that I worked full-time in a demanding job while earning my undergraduate degree.

I will contact you next week about scheduling a meeting so we can further discuss my qualifications and the needs of your firm. Hopefully, we will find that Frank has some good intuition! Please feel free to call me in the mean time. I look forward to talking with you.

Sincerely,

Stanley Student

Enclosure

Sample Cover Letter #3 (Semi-Block Format)

Stanley Student
123 Maple Street
Fort Lauderdale, Florida 33312
(954) 123-4567
students@nsu.law.nova.edu

May 7, 2009

Ethel Employer, Esq.
Good, Employer and Choice, P.A.
7890 Broad Street
Miami, Florida 33123

Dear Ms. Employer:

I am very interested in the part-time summer position that you recently posted at Nova Southeastern University, Shepard Broad Law Center. I am a second year student and have all of the qualifications your position requires.

Your posting states that you are looking for a second or third year student in the top half of the class, preferably with experience in torts, insurance and pre-trial practice. Relevant to your criteria, I worked as an insurance adjuster for two years, before starting law school. In addition, I am in the top 30% of my class and, last semester, I earned an "A" in my Pre-Trial Skills workshop.

I am available to start at any time, and would like to meet to discuss further how my qualifications would satisfy the needs of your firm. I will call you in a few days about arranging an appointment.

Sincerely,

Stanley Student

Enclosure

III. Thank You Letters

You absolutely **MUST** send a thank you letter after every interview. In fact, you should send a thank you letter after every job search contact, telephone call, informational meeting, referral or other personal contact. Like your other documents, it **must** be grammatically correct, with no typos. Candidates *have* lost opportunities because of sloppy/careless thank you letters.

The thank you letter should be mailed immediately --within 48 hours-- after the event. It should be typed on the same bond letterhead you used for your resume and cover letter. If you are more familiar with the recipient, a brief 30 word thank you note may be handwritten on a plain note card, but handwritten letters are not preferred for business under these circumstances.

Keep your thank you letter brief. Two paragraphs are plenty. If thanking for an interview, mention the date you interviewed and something that will remind the recipient of who you are, as they may have met several job candidates on the same day. This requires personalizing each letter. If you met with several people at the employer's office, send a letter to each of them, but vary the letters so they don't appear canned.

Be sure to spell the recipient's name correctly and use his/her proper title, if any. You should ask for each interviewer's business card, so you will have this information.

Conclude your thank you letter with a final word of appreciation. If the letter pertains to an interview, re-emphasize your interest in working for the employer.

Do's and Don'ts for Thank You Letter

DO:

- Send a thank you letter after every interview.
- Try to personalize each letter to help the interviewer remember you.
- Mail your letter within 48 hours after the interview.
- Type the letter.

DON'T:

- Handwrite a job search thank you letter unless it is a brief note to a personal acquaintance.

Sample Thank You Letter #1
For Interview

Stanley Student
123 Maple Street
Fort Lauderdale, Florida 33312
(954) 123-4567
students@nsu.law.nova.edu

August 29, 2009

Ethel Employer, Esq.
Good, Employer and Choice, P.A.
7890 Broad Street
Miami, Florida 33123

Dear Ms. Employer:

Thank you for meeting with me on Tuesday to discuss the opening at your firm, and my qualifications for the position. I was very impressed with the professionalism and dedication of each person I met at your office. I am more confident than ever that my background and skills align well with the needs of your firm.

I was pleased to see that my business experience at Nova Industries and my law school course work would enable me to make an immediate contribution to your team. It was also amazing to learn that we had several mutual acquaintances from Florida State and, yet, we had not met before. It is, indeed, a small world after all!

Thank you, again, for the interview. I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Sincerely,

Stanley Student

Sample Thank You Letter #2
For Informational Meeting

Stanley Student
123 Maple Street
Fort Lauderdale, Florida 33312
(954) 123-4567
students@nsu.law.nova.edu

January 4, 2010

Ethel Employer, Esq.
Good, Employer and Choice, P.A.
7890 Broad Street
Miami, Florida 33123

Dear Ms. Employer:

I am writing to let you know how much I appreciate your taking the time to meet with me yesterday to discuss my job search. Your observations on the current legal market, and the field of family law, were invaluable and right on point.

As you suggested, I have enclosed three original resumes. Please feel free to distribute them to any prospective employers that may need an attorney with my background and credentials. In addition, I will contact Helen Helpful, as you suggested, in the next few days. Thank you again for your interest and guidance.

Sincerely,

Stanley Student

Enclosures

Sample Thank You Letter #3
For Referral

Stanley Student
123 Maple Street
Fort Lauderdale, Florida 33312
(954) 123-4567
students@nsu.law.nova.edu

November 29, 2009

Ethel Employer, Esq.
Good, Employer and Choice, P.A.
7890 Broad Street
Miami, Florida 33123

Dear Ms. Employer:

Thank you for the referral to the job opportunity at Major Corporation, Inc. I immediately followed up with a cover letter and resume to George General Counsel. I hope to be hearing from him in the near future, thanks to your thoughtfulness.

Sincerely,

Stanley Student

IV. Letters to Provide Additional Materials

Following an interview, or perhaps even prior to an interview, a prospective employer may ask you to submit a transcript, a writing sample, or references. You must include a letter with the additional submission.

Use the same letter head that you used for your cover letters. This letter will be very brief, just two or three sentences, so be sure that the letter is centered on the page properly and not on the top third of the paper.

Do's and Don'ts for Letter to Provide Additional Materials

DO:

- Make it a formal letter to enclose documents.
- Try to personalize the letter to help the interviewer or recruiter remember you.
- Mail your letter as soon as possible with the enclosures.

DON'T:

- Handwrite a brief note to accompany your documents.
- Fold your enclosures into a tiny envelope if there are a lot of pages.
- Delay in getting the requested documents to the employer.

Sample Letter to Provide Additional Materials

Stanley Student
123 Maple Street
Fort Lauderdale, Florida 33312
(954) 123-4567
students@nsu.law.nova.edu

August 29, 2009

Ethel Employer, Esq.
Good, Employer and Choice, P.A.
7890 Broad Street
Miami, Florida 33123

Dear Ms. Employer:

In response to your letter of August 28, 2009, which requests additional information regarding my application for employment with your firm, I have enclosed my transcript, a list of references and a writing sample for your review. As you will see, the writing sample is a legal memorandum I wrote for my Lawyering Skills class this past semester.

If you would like any more information or documentation, please let me know. I continue to have a great interest in the position and hope to hear positively from you in the near future.

Sincerely,

Stanley Student

Enclosures

V. Letter to Request Informational Meeting

Networking is the best way to get a job. In fact, 80% of jobs nationwide are filled through networking. The magic of networking comes when one person you know personally gives you two or three contact names. You speak or meet with these new contacts, upon the reference of your personal acquaintance, and they give you a few more names. Each time, you seek information about the job market and more names to contact, until you finally find a contact who has or knows about the perfect job for you. Remember, in an informational meeting, you are asking for information and contact names, not a job. You will meet or talk with people who have no jobs to offer, but may be able to refer you to another person who has or knows of a job for you, or can tell you more about the specifics of a field of law.

When contacting people to whom you have been referred, it is better to write a short letter. You should mention the name of the person who referred you. Ask if you could have just fifteen to twenty minutes of their time for some guidance or suggestions on your job search. Tell them that you are not asking for a job, just their counsel. When you meet, be sure you don't go over the time limit you set. Remember, this person is doing you a real favor, so don't impose on their valuable time. Be sure to send a copy of your request letter to the person who referred you. You do this by typing a "cc" on the bottom, at the left margin, and the person's name. The "cc" refers to "carbon copy", a holdover from when copies were made with carbon paper. Although you will be printing your additional copies on the laser printer, the "cc" designation is still proper.

You will have to decide whether to enclose your resume. If you enclose a resume with a letter to a stranger, they may automatically assume that you are looking for a job and not even read the cover letter. On the other hand, they may read both and be more able and ready to help you.

Do's and Don'ts for Letter for Informational Meeting

DO:

- Be sure to name the person who referred you.
- Make it clear that you are looking for information, not a job.
- Send a copy of the letter to the person who referred you.

DON'T:

- Make the letter too long.
- Mention the name of a referring person with getting approval from that person.

Sample Letter Requesting Informational Meeting

Stanley Student
123 Maple Street
Fort Lauderdale, Florida 33312
(954) 123-4567
students@nsu.law.nova.edu

November 2, 2009

Ethel Employer, Esq.
Good, Employer and Choice, P.A.
7890 Broad Street
Miami, Florida 33123

Dear Ms. Employer:

Charlie Contact suggested that I speak with you. Charlie and I worked together several years at Old Employer Inc. I am a third year law student at Nova Southeastern University, Shepard Broad Law Center, and I am looking for guidance as I conduct a search for my first full-time legal position. Charlie thought, considering my experience and areas of interest, that you are in an especially good position to counsel me.

I would greatly appreciate it if you could give me just fifteen to twenty minutes of your time. I am not asking you for a job, just the benefit of your advice and suggestions. I will make the necessary arrangements to be able to meet with you at your convenience; just tell me the time and place that will work for you. Also, please let me know if you would like to review my resume prior to our meeting, and I will gladly forward it to you.

I will call your office in about week to see if we can finalize arrangements for a meeting at that time. Charlie speaks highly of you, and I am looking forward to meeting you.

Sincerely,

Stanley Student

cc: Charlie Contact

VII. Acceptance Letter

You got the job! Congratulations! Now, you must write a letter to formally accept the position. You should specify the position and its title, the section or department to which you have been assigned, the salary and any special perks, the starting date and any other terms agreed upon by you and the employer. If the employer already sent a written offer with these details, you may just refer to that letter in your written confirmation of acceptance. Mention how pleased you are to receive the offer.

If employment is dependent upon your relocation or admission to the bar, specify when you will notify the firm of a future starting date.

Do's and Don'ts for Letter of Acceptance

DO:

- Be sure to write the letter promptly, making your acceptance clear.
- Be specific in your understanding of the job offer, starting date and other particulars.

DON'T:

- Negotiate in the letter. If there are still outstanding details, simply mention them and that you look forward to resolving them.
- Get any information wrong about the job offer.

Sample Acceptance Letter

Stanley Student
123 Maple Street
Fort Lauderdale, Florida 33312
(954) 123-4567
students@nsu.law.nova.edu

August 30, 2009

Ethel Employer, Esq.
Good, Employer and Choice, P.A.
7890 Broad Street
Miami, Florida 33123

Dear Ms. Employer:

I am very excited about the offer you extended to me to join your firm as an Associate. I gladly accept the position.

Your letter dated August 29, 2009, sets forth the salary, life insurance, medical benefits, vacation and sick pay policy that apply to this position. Based on our telephone discussion, it is also my understanding that the firm will pay for my bar dues, and that I will be eligible to participate in the firm's 401K plan after twelve full months of employment.

You asked me to start within two weeks after my admission to the Florida Bar. I will contact you as soon as I receive the notice of my admission so we can set a starting date.

I am truly looking forward to joining your well regarded firm.

Sincerely,

Stanley Student

VII. Judicial Clerkship Letters

When you apply for a Judicial Clerkship, your letter must show, quickly and clearly, your ability to write well and your high level of professionalism. While this is the goal with all job related cover letters, nowhere is it more important to make this outstanding first impression than with a judicial clerkship.

Although the body of a letter is basically the same as most cover letters, most judges do not want to hear in great detail why you want to be a judicial clerk, but rather, they want you to explain why you would be an asset to the judge's chambers. Some judges may want a detailed explanation of why you want to clerk. All judges want to know why you want to clerk *particularly* for them. A sample letter is provided below, however, in this type of job search even more than others, a letter that is not truly personalized to both the judge and to your qualifications will likely be ineffective.

One major problem that students encounter when sending judicial clerkship letters is addressing the letters properly. Judicial Clerkship guides will have the full explanation of the differences in addressing different judges, but be sure to watch out for the following: always indicate if someone is Chief Judge, Senior Judge or Judge; determine if someone is a Judge or Justice; double check the full and correct name of the court; and be sure to use "The Honorable" when writing a judge or justice's full name.

The second major problem that students encounter is the timing of these letters. Students generally should begin applying for post-graduate clerkships at the beginning or during their second year in law school. More information about these far-reaching deadlines is available in the judicial clerkship materials.

If you are applying for a clerkship out of town, be sure to explain any connections to that area and your willingness to relocate. Be sure also to mention if you are going to be in their vicinity in the near future, and available for interviewing. You are more likely to be granted an interview in another geographic area if the judge knows you will already be in town, and have some sort of connection there.

Do's and Don'ts for Judicial Clerkship Letters

DO:

- Be sure to address the letter properly
- Let the judge know of your flexibility (or lack thereof) in geographic location
- Make sure you properly address why you want to work for a particular judge

DON'T:

- Write a long letter detailing your lifelong ambition to clerk.
- Forget to let them know if you will be in town to interview.

Sample Letter for Judicial Clerkships

Stanley Student
123 Maple Street
Fort Lauderdale, Florida 33312
(954) 123-4567
students@nsu.law.nova.edu

September 7, 2009

The Honorable Ed Wapner
U.S. District Court, SDNY
40 Centre Street, Foley Square
New York, NY 10017

Dear Judge Wapner:

I am a second year student at Nova Southeastern University, Shepard Broad Law Center, in Fort Lauderdale, Florida. I am writing to express my interest in a clerkship in your chambers following my graduation in 2010. I intend to return to New York City, my hometown, following my graduation.

My initial exposure to advocacy came in my first year of law school, in my Lawyering Skills and Values (LSV) class. Unlike other first year writing programs, our class emphasized practical legal skills such as drafting and client skills, as well as excellent research tools. Moreover, this past summer I worked with the Staff Attorneys of the 17th Judicial Circuit, and became interested in using these legal skills in the judicial system. In addition to being on Law Review this year, I am enrolled in the litigation track of our two year LSV program, which will further enhance my research and writing skills. I am eager to bring all these experiences and skills to your courtroom, a court known for its interesting and complex casework.

I have enclosed my resume, transcript and writing sample for your review. Letters of recommendation will be sent shortly from professors Tom Jones and Marion Smith. I will be in New York City many times in the upcoming months: Friday, October 28, Wednesday, November 23, and for a two week period starting December 21 and running through January 4. I am available for an interview anytime on those dates, and would welcome the opportunity to meet with you at your convenience to discuss my application. Thank you for your consideration, and I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Stanley Student

Enclosures

VIII. Special Letters for Special Situations

A. Letter to Reject Job Offer

Even if you are rejecting a job offer, you should do so in a pleasant writing. Remember that you have an entire career ahead of you and you never know what dealings you may have with the recipient in the future.

Thank the employer for the offer and say that you regret not being able to accept it. If possible and appropriate, include your reasons for rejecting the position, but don't inject negative statements.

B. Letter to Network Contacts

If you are not able to meet with a personal contact that may help you in networking for a job, perhaps because they live outside the immediate area, you can still network with them through a letter.

In your letter, tell about the reason you are looking for a job (e.g., graduation) and what kind of job you are looking for, including as many particulars as possible. Ask for their help in forwarding your resume to anyone they know who might have a suitable position for you. Also, ask them to inform you of anyone they think you should contact.

A. Sample Letter to Reject Offer

Stanley Student
123 Maple Street
Fort Lauderdale, Florida 33312
(954) 123-4567
students@nsu.law.nova.edu

September 7, 2009

Ethel Employer, Esq.
Good, Employer and Choice, P.A.
7890 Broad Street
Miami, Florida 33123

Dear Ms. Employer:

Thank you for offering me a position as an Associate in your firm. I regret that I must decline the offer. I was very impressed by everyone I met. I would be proud to be a member of your firm, however, I have already accepted a position with another firm, which is located closer to my home.

I hope I will have the opportunity to work with the lawyers from your office, whether in bar activities or in practice, as I will welcome opportunities to maintain contact with your firm.

Sincerely,

Stanley Student

B. Sample Letter to Network Contact

Stanley Student
123 Maple Street
Fort Lauderdale, Florida 33312
(954) 123-4567
students@nsu.law.nova.edu

September 7, 2009

Andy Accountant
123 Commercial Way
Tampa, Florida 56789

Dear Andy:

After three challenging years of law school, I am facing an even bigger challenge now, finding a full-time job as an attorney. I'm looking for the advice and counsel of people I know and trust.

My ideal position is in a growing firm or corporation, with a small to medium size legal staff. I would like to use my business background as a value-added benefit to an employer. I am particularly interested in a position that encompasses transactional work, mergers and acquisitions, and business formation. I prefer to stay in South Florida, but would consider moving to another part of Florida for the right opportunity.

If you become aware of any clients, friends, or acquaintances, who are associated with a firm or corporation with such an opening, I would appreciate it if you would provide me with their names, so I may contact them personally. I have enclosed three copies of my resume. Any assistance or advice you can give me will be greatly appreciated.

Best Regards,

Stanley Student

Enclosures

Additional Sample Letters

Sample 1L Cover Letter

Phillip Phirstyear
4954 S. University Drive, #3
Fort Lauderdale, FL 33322
(954)643-7856
phirstyear@nsu.law.nova.edu

November 1, 2009

Ms. Jane Wheeler
Public Interest Institute
17 E. Monroe Street, Suite 212
Chicago, IL 60603

Dear Ms. Wheeler:

I am a first-year student at Nova Southeastern University, Shepard Broad Law Center, and I am interested in working on housing and community organizing issues for your office this coming summer.

I first became interested in housing issues when I participated in Alternative Spring Break at the College of William & Mary. Over spring break, during my junior and senior years, I worked on housing rehabilitation projects with a team in eastern Kentucky. After college, I spent one year with Habitat for Humanity working with builders and future homeowners to construct affordable homes.

While projects to help create affordable housing are necessary, the support needed to maintain such housing goes far beyond the maintenance of the physical structures. I am excited about the recent community developments in which Public Interest Institute has taken a leading role. I believe that the recent projects initiated and developed by your organization will lead to lasting improvements in affordable housing in Chicago.

I have enclosed my resume and brief writing sample for your review. I will be in Chicago visiting my family during winter break, from December 23rd to January 7th, and would welcome the opportunity to speak with you about a summer associate position. I will call your office on December 20, 2009, to see whether we can arrange an interview during that period. Thank you in advance for your consideration.

Sincerely,

John T. Student

Enclosure(s): Resume, transcript, writing sample

Sample 2L Cover Letter

Samantha Student
1234 Anywhere Lane
Davie, FL 33314
(954) 555-5555
students@nsu.law.nova.edu

September 7, 2009

Ms. Elizabeth Price
Hiring Attorney
Allston & Bird
One Atlantic Center
1201 West Peachtree Street
Atlanta, GA 30309-3424

Dear Ms. Price:

I am a second-year student at Nova Southeastern University Shepard Broad Law Center, and I am interested in a summer associate position in your financial services department. I grew up in Atlanta, and plan to return there upon my graduation in May 2006.

I believe that my strong analytical, research and writing skills would make me a valuable addition to your summer class. Last summer, I worked as a research assistant for the Honorable Richard Posner and Professor Joel Smith. I collected empirical data on abortion trends, conducted a 20-state survey on laws concerning covenants not to compete, and I helped edit the seventh edition of Judge Posner's Labor Law textbook. I found the variety of topics to be interesting and, through commendations on my work-product, I gained further confidence in my legal research and writing abilities.

I would like to put these skills to work for your financial services clients this summer. Before coming to law school, I worked as a research analyst in an investment bank. I plan to return to the field of finance when I graduate, and I am very interested in the exciting work being done at Alston & Bird. In particular, I have been following the *Coca-Cola* case in which you represent the defendant. I believe that my background in banking and my legal education have prepared me well for a financial services position at your firm.

Enclosed please find a resume, transcript and sample of my writing. I would greatly appreciate the opportunity to meet with you, and I will call your office next week to schedule an appointment. Thank you in advance for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Samantha Student

Enclosures

Sample 3L Cover Letter

Bonnie Barrister
5454 South Everett Ave., Apt. 4F
Miami, FL 33010
(305) 555-5555
barristerb@nsu.law.nova.edu

September 7, 2009

Mr. Doug Bellis
U.S. House of Representatives - Office of Legislative Counsel
135 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Mr. Bellis:

I am a third year law student at Nova Southeastern University, Shepard Broad Law Center, and am interested in a position at the Office of Legislative Counsel following my graduation in May, 2006. As a result of my work experience, academic career, and clinical education, I have decided to pursue a career in legislative policy-making.

Last summer, I worked at the Massachusetts Governor's Office of Legal Counsel where I researched the constitutional implications of various laws, including those pertaining to housing, education and criminal procedure issues. In addition, I examined federal preemption issues raised by proposed state laws, and prepared analysis of pending legislation for Governor Cellucci. I found the problem-solving component inherent in the creation and amendment of legislation to be gratifying, and the fast-paced environment surrounding legislative procedure to be exciting. Moreover, I believe that my strong analytical, research and writing skills will allow me to be an asset to your office.

Through my participation in the Mandel Legal Aid Clinic, and my law school class work, I have handled difficult constitutional and administrative law questions. For instance, I conducted a significant amount of research on the Takings Clause during my involvement with the Clinic's Homeless Assistance Project. My goal is to enhance my knowledge of urban policy issues and, ultimately, specialize in housing and community development law. At this early stage in my career, however, I recognize that it is important for me to be exposed to as many areas of federal legislation as possible.

I have enclosed my resume, which highlights my education and experience. I would greatly appreciate the opportunity to meet with you to further discuss how I may help meet the needs of your office. Thank you in advance for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Bonnie Barrister
Enclosure