

JOB SEARCH LETTERS

COVER LETTERS

A cover letter introduces you to a prospective employer. The cover letter is the first piece of your writing that a potential employer sees and demonstrates you have the ability to state your case in clear and concise language. It is sent either in response to a specific job opening or to an employer you have reason to believe would consider you for a position if one became available. The cover letter and resume play a very important role in whether you will be interviewed.

Before drafting a cover letter, carefully read the position description and research the employer. Underline key skills and experiences the employer seeks. Next, look at your resume and think of specific examples in your background that demonstrate that you have the qualifications the employer is seeking.

First paragraph: State your reason for the letter. Name the position for which you are applying and why you are interested. If someone suggested you should contact the employer, or if you heard of the opening through a specific source, mention that first. The opening paragraph ideally should create interest on the part of the reader.

Second and/or third paragraph: Discuss the qualifications and attributes you think would be of greatest relevance to the employer, given the job description and the context. If you have related experience or specialized training, be sure to point it out. Although you may refer to points contained in your resume, you should not repeat them verbatim; rather, mention specific experiences or course work that qualify you for THIS position.

Closing paragraph: Refer the reader to the enclosed resume, references, or other enclosures, and indicate your availability for interviews. Thank the reader for considering you as a candidate for the position.

THANK-YOU LETTERS

Following an interview, thank each interviewer for the time taken to meet with you. In addition to thanking them, this letter should identify the particulars of your interview (date, place, other interviewers, position) and refer to specifics of the interview or day that were of particular interest. Remind the interviewer of your unique fit with the organization based upon information received during the interview. Reaffirm your interest in the job. Add any information you did not cover in the interview and refer to any material you may be enclosing (references, writing samples, or transcripts). As with other letters, politely indicate the next action you expect to make or have happen and when. Either mail word-processed letters or send your note via email. In general, employers discourage handwritten notes.

TRANSMITTAL LETTERS

A transmittal letter accompanies any writing samples, transcripts, or additional material the interviewer may have requested during your interview. Try to include in this letter statements that will reinforce your candidacy, including those that offer a reminder about your qualifications. Indicate your continued interest in the position

OTHER LETTERS

At some time in your job search, you may send a variety of letters to one or more employers, including letters accepting job offers, indicating your continued interest in a position, rejecting job offers, or withdrawing your name from consideration for the position.

POINTS TO REMEMBER

Format: Use adequate margins and good balance and layout. Keep it short, straightforward, and neat.

Send letters to a specific person: Avoid writing “To Whom It May Concern” or “Dear Hiring Partner” unless you are answering a blind advertisement that contains only a post office box number. If you cannot obtain the name of the hiring partner, hiring attorney, or recruitment coordinator, or if you are writing to a small firm not listed in any directory or online, address the letter to a named partner whom you know is still associated with the firm.

Symplcity, Martindale Hubbell, LEXIS, and WESTLAW online can be helpful in finding names. A brief telephone call to the employer to verify a name is acceptable.

Please note that, in Massachusetts, attorneys are addressed not as Ms. or Mr., but as Attorney (“Dear Attorney Smith.”)

Be brief: No job search letter should be more than one page.

Use consistent paper: Print your letters on the same paper as your resume and envelopes.

Check, and recheck, for typos: If you are sending similar letters to multiple employers, be sure the firm name in the body of the letter and in the address is consistent.

Avoid overusing “I”: Try to use a variety of words to begin your sentences. One method is to begin with a subordinate clause (“As you can see from my enclosed resume, I will graduate...”).

Follow the proper form: Use a colon after the salutation, not a comma (“Dear Ms. Smith:”). Single space your letter and use two spaces between paragraphs. There is no need to indent. Space the letter on the page so the document appears balanced. Your return address usually includes your address and date, but you can use the header from your resume instead. Line up your signature with your return address and date, type your name four lines down from the closing and remember to sign your letter.

Cover Letter–Request for an Informational Interview

12 Moser Street
Springfield, MA 01119
February 3, 20XX

Jane Smith, Esq.
Smith & Jones, Attorneys at Law
600 Willow Street
Albany, NY 01103

Dear Ms. Smith:

I enjoyed your recent presentation “Practicing Law in a Criminal Setting,” held here at Western New England University School of Law. I am writing to ask if you would have the time to speak with me individually while I am in Albany during spring break.

I am a first-year student and would like to practice in the Albany area after graduation. My interest in criminal law stems from my past experience volunteering with the Innocence Project in New York City and from my current coursework. I would welcome the chance to hear about your career path, the current legal market, and the practice of criminal law.

I will call you next week to see if you would have the time to talk with me.

Sincerely,

Jack Jones

(If you have the addressee’s email address, you may send the content of this letter to them as an email message. You do not enclose a resume when requesting an informational interview but you can bring one with you, in case you’re asked for it.)

Cover Letter for Summer Law Clerk–Unadvertised Position

JOHN MALLOY
45 Crestview Circle
Springfield, MA 01104
(413) 747-4678 jmalloy@aol.com

January 31, 20XX

Paul Jones, Esq.
Senior Legal Counsel
International Business Machines
1143 Express Way
Armonk, NY 03040

Dear Mr. Jones:

I recently read the Times' feature article about you, Mr. Adams, and Mr. West, and I was very impressed by the new marketing strategy planned for IBM. I am writing to inquire about employment opportunities that IBM may have available for the upcoming summer.

I am a first-year law student at Western New England University School of Law. My motivation for returning to school after working for four years in Chicago was to pursue an education that would better prepare me to formulate and negotiate marketing and licensing opportunities in the computer industry.

My interest in the field was piqued during my internship with ADCO Computers, sponsors of the Jenny Jones Women's Golf Tournament at Hilton Head. Subsequently, I gained additional marketing and promotions experience working for Talbot Magazines in the public relations department. My involvement and success in managing events for the Boston University Alumni Club in Chicago further attest to my talents in marketing, and my performance in law school indicates that I can successfully combine the two careers.

Enclosed you will find a copy of my resume. I am eager to discuss with you my interest in working for IBM and am available for an interview at your convenience.

Thank you for your attention and consideration to this letter. I look forward to speaking with you.

Sincerely,

John Malloy

Enclosure

Cover Letter for Summer Law Clerk–Referral

19 Pine Road
Amherst, MA 16037
February 1, 20XX

Dana B. Smith, Esq.
Smith, Boyd & Chase
111 Main Street
Springfield, MA 01103

Dear Attorney Smith:

John Adams suggested I contact you about my interest in a summer position in the Springfield area. I am finishing my second year at Western New England University School of Law, and I am applying to Smith, Boyd & Chase because of my great interest in tort and contract litigation.

As my resume indicates, I have not only taken the required courses in tort and contract law, but have participated in both the Consumer Protection and Disability Law Clinics. In addition, I have just completed courses in Litigation in the Pretrial Phase and in Products Liability. For these reasons, I believe that I could make a meaningful contribution to your firm as a summer law clerk.

I will contact you shortly to see what the possibilities might be. I look forward to talking with you.

Sincerely,

John W. London
Enclosure: resume

Cover Letter for Summer Position–Not Advertised
(Availability of a Position Unknown)

12 Putnam Road
West Springfield, MA 01089
May 25, 20XX

Gerald Anderson, Esq.
Mallove, Jones & Smith, P.C.
100 Court Way
Springfield, MA 01103

Dear Attorney Anderson:

I am a native of Springfield and am currently finishing my first year of law school. Because I hope to practice in this area after graduation with a firm like yours that has a variety of practice areas, I am writing to apply for a position as a law clerk in your firm for the coming summer.

I am currently completing the first year Legal Research and Writing course. We have researched and written several memoranda both in support of and in opposition to civil pretrial motions. This research and writing, combined with the extensive research and writing I did in college for my degree in psychology, has taught me the importance of knowing the facts and supporting my conclusions.

As you can see from my resume, I have held several responsible positions in retail sales throughout college. At the same time, I played on the school's varsity basketball team, which required a significant amount of time. I learned to handle many tasks at once, and gained experience in reporting to several managers.

I believe that, with my maturity, experience, and the legal research and writing skills that I developed this year, I can be an effective summer law clerk for your firm. In the hope that I can discuss with you in person my interest and qualifications, I will call your office in a few days to see if a meeting can be arranged. In the meantime, thank you for your time and attention.

Sincerely,

J. W. Michener

Enclosure: resume

Cover Letter for On-Campus Resume Collection

Street Address
City, State & Zip
Date

Michael H. Burke, Esq.
Chair, Hiring Committee
Bulkley, Richardson, and Gelinias, LLP
1500 Main Street
Springfield, MA 01115

Dear Attorney Burke:

I am very interested in being considered for the associate position that you posted with our Office of Career Services. I am a third-year law student at Western New England University School of Law. As my transcript indicates, I have performed well in a broad range of law courses. However, my strongest interests lie in the areas of commercial law and bankruptcy. Most particularly, I enjoy the strategy and planning aspects of these fields.

My experience as a member of the Law Review has already contributed significantly to my proficiency in legal research and writing. I am confident the upcoming year of editing other people's writing will further improve the quality of my writing and will sharpen my organizational skills.

As a law clerk at Murray, Fitzgerald, Moriarty and Callahan, I honed my writing and analytical skills by performing research, primarily in corporate and real estate law. Presently, I am employed at Hendel, Collins & Newton, P.C. As you may know, the firm specializes in bankruptcy and commercial law; I handle cases principally in those fields. I have also worked there as a research assistant and editor for a forthcoming treatise on bankruptcy being published by LRP Publications. This latter experience has enabled me to improve my own style by evaluating the work of judges and academics.

I look forward to discussing my qualifications with you. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth H. Johnson

Enclosures

Cover Letter When Applying Directly for an Advertised Position

10 Cambridge Street, Apt.1B
Westfield, MA 01185
October 29, 20XX

Christina L. Cardona, Personnel Specialist
Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Office of the Attorney General
Personnel Office - 20th Floor
Boston, MA 02108-1698

Dear Ms. Cardona:

Enclosed please find my resume for consideration for an attorney's position with the Office of the Attorney General. After graduation, I am interested in pursuing a career in public interest law and litigation. I have previous experience in criminal law and courtroom procedures, and I would like to make a contribution to your office.

My experience includes participation on the Jessup International Law Moot Court Team. Being on the team helped enhance my oral advocacy, research, and writing skills. I also completed a course in international law that required oral argument on significant international law issues. While interning with the Hampden County District Attorney's Office, I further developed my advocacy skills in the courtroom. I prosecuted several bench trials in district and juvenile courts and obtained judgments in favor of the Commonwealth. I also presented arguments to the Court in bail hearings, and I learned a great deal about trial methods. I continue to learn about the courtroom in my present position as a law clerk for the Honorable William Jones, and I am also enrolled in a course in trial methods being taught by United States District Court Judge Thomas Connor.

My background also includes experience in business. My work at Liberty Mutual exposed me to contract law and the legal interpretation of insurance policies. There, I worked with legal counsel on various insurance law issues. In addition, I was selected by my law school to recruit at undergraduate colleges because of my strong interpersonal and communication skills.

I am eager to meet with you at your convenience to learn more about the Attorney General's Office and discuss how I may make a contribution.

Sincerely,

B. George French

Enclosure

Cover Letter for Lateral Position–Referral

Robert Hazelton

3 Grace Road, Weymouth, MA 02188
555-555-000 email@email.com

September 29, 20XX

Mary Applegate
Human Resources Manager
Donovan Hatem LLP
Two Seaport Lane
Boston, MA 02210

Dear Ms. Applegate:

Christina Mason suggested that I contact you about my interest in an associate position with your firm. It is my understanding that you are currently seeking an associate with experience in commercial, business, and insurance litigation.

As you can see from my enclosed resume, I have eight years of experience in corporate litigation. After completing my law degree at Western New England University School of Law, I returned to the greater Boston area to practice. In my three years at Craig and Macauley, I acted as second chair on numerous cases as they moved through all stages of litigation. During my tenure at the Law Offices of William T. Kennedy, P.C., I successfully filed and litigated a claim of tortious interference brought by a major Boston-based advertising agency. As lead counsel in this matter, I had primary responsibility for developing the case and directing related assignments for junior associates.

My current position at Glaser & Wilson, P.C. gives me a great deal of responsibility. My current caseload is between 100-150 cases, all at various stages of litigation. My interpersonal skills are continuing to develop as I work with clients, fellow associates, senior attorneys, as well as support staff. This caseload also allows me to hone my organizational skills as I work daily to meet deadlines and maintain current and accurate information on each case.

I welcome the opportunity to meet with you in person to learn more about Donovan Hatem LLP and the current associate opportunity. I will contact you shortly to make an appointment to meet with you.

Sincerely,

Robert Hazelton

Enclosure

Clerkship Cover Letter

35 Rocky Road
Springfield, MA 01103
September 4, 20XX

The Honorable Patricia Skaza*
Associate Justice
Superior Court of MA
1234 New Courthouse
Boston, MA 02108

Dear Judge Skaza:

In May, 20XX, I will graduate from Western New England University School of Law, and I am applying for a judicial clerkship with the Superior Court for the 20XX-20XX term. I am open to an assignment in either eastern or western Massachusetts. As a task-oriented person, I work best in a supportive atmosphere where ideas and questions flow freely, yet work is produced independently. From everything I heard at the recent information session on clerkships at which a representative of the Superior Court spoke, it sounds as though this is exactly the working atmosphere in the Superior Court.

Last fall I began devoting time outside of class to gaining practical legal experience. My work at the Hampden County District Attorney's Office has strengthened my research and writing skills and my understanding of Massachusetts criminal practice. I have written three appellate briefs that have been submitted to the Appeals Court on behalf of the District Attorney's Office. In writing the briefs, I demonstrated not only my ability to analyze legal problems, apply the facts, and produce competent written discussion of the issues, but also my ability to meet strict deadlines.

Enclosed are the transcript and the two writing samples you requested. I have requested letters of recommendation from Attorneys Sally Dunphy and Judy Baker of the Hampden County District Attorney's Office and Professor Robert Buchanan of the Western New England University School of Law. Attorney Dunphy's confidential recommendation is enclosed, and both Professor Buchanan and Attorney Baker have sent their letters directly to you.

If there is any additional information I can provide, please let me know and I will be happy to do so. I will call shortly to see if you would like additional information. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Allen D. Lincoln

Enclosures

** (To apply for a clerkship, you should use a simple and businesslike cover letter. While judges in state and federal lower and intermediate appellate courts may be addressed as Dear Judge Skaza, the Chief and Associate Justices of the United States Supreme Court and the highest court in each state receive special salutations. In some states, this special salutation is also used at the intermediate appellate court level. Chief Justices are addressed as Dear Ms. Chief Justice or Dear Chief Justice Skaza. Associate Justices are addressed as Dear Ms. Justice or Dear Justice Skaza.)*

Letter Confirming Interest in the Position

38 Carver Street
Holyoke, MA 01104
April 15, 20XX

Michael Hassett, Esq.
Hassett & Buendo
1350 Main Street
Springfield, MA 01103

Dear Attorney Hassett:

I enjoyed interviewing with you last month for the summer law clerk position. I write today to express my strong and continuing interest in the position.

As we discussed, I not only have had significant coursework in law school related to corporations and other businesses, but I also have ten years of business ownership and management experience that will enable me be useful in working effectively with your corporate and small business clients.

I am very excited about the prospect of working with your firm, and I look forward to hearing from you in the near future.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Calley

(This kind of a letter can be used as an additional opportunity to “sell” yourself to an employer. In addition to a letter reiterating your training and experience, you could write to send an updated resume or discuss another subject.)

Thank-You Letter–Summer Position

13 Clark Circle
Springfield, MA 01119
April 4, 20XX

Carol Parker, Esq.
Vice President and Senior Counsel
Law Department
MassMutual Life Insurance Company
125 State St.
Springfield, MA 01105

Dear Attorney Parker:

I appreciated the opportunity to talk with you yesterday. The information you gave me was extremely helpful, and I am excited about the possibility of applying my education and work experience to the summer position we discussed.

As you requested, I am enclosing a copy of the brief I wrote for Halliday & Spenser in the appeal of a breach of contract case. I would like to point out that the law firm reviewed my brief and, without making any changes, filed it with the Massachusetts Appeals Court on behalf of the defendant corporation.

If I can provide you with any additional information, please let me know. I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Sincerely,

Jill Wright

Enclosure: appellate brief

Thank-You Letter–Associate Position

1300 Commonwealth Avenue
Boston, MA 01060
May 1, 20XX

J. M. Prendergast, Esq.
Colson, Malone & Tucker
325 Storrow Drive
Boston, MA 02256

Dear Attorney Prendergast:

Thank you for discussing with me the opening for an associate attorney, and how my background and skills match the position in your criminal law department. I enjoyed meeting you and Attorney Smith, and learning more about your firm and its practice.

Because I spent a law school summer as an intern in the Norfolk County District Attorney's office trying criminal cases under the Massachusetts student practice rule, I believe I can make an immediate contribution to your criminal defense department. My practical experience while in law school, combined with my demonstrated writing ability and extensive work on Law Review, have prepared me to assume independent client responsibilities quickly. As you requested, I am enclosing for your review a copy of the brief I wrote last summer for the District Attorney's office in a felony case currently on appeal to the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court.

I look forward to hearing from you soon. In the meantime, please let me know if I can provide more information or answer any questions to assist you in your decision.

Sincerely,

Norman J. Peterson

Enclosure

Letter of Acceptance of a Position

64 Wilson Avenue
Springfield, MA 01119
March 29, 20XX

James L. Kaplan, Esq.
Vice President and Senior Counsel
Sloan Corporation, Inc.
42 Oak Lane
Pelham, MA 01562

Dear Mr. Kaplan:

I received your offer letter yesterday, and am delighted to accept the position as a staff attorney.

As you stated in your letter, my starting date is September 1, 20XX. The salary for this position is \$50,000 a year to start, with a six-month review. The enclosed benefit package information was most helpful.

I look forward to starting my work with your organization. If you have any questions for me while I am preparing for the bar exam this summer, please let me know.

Sincerely,

William Carpenter

Letter of Rejection of an Offer

JUDITH WRIGHT, JD

3 Grace Road, Weymouth, MA 02188, (978) 555-6599 rhazelton@aol.com

April 27, 20XX

Susan Warner, Esq.
Assistant Director of Attorney Recruitment
Office of the District Attorney, Bronx County
198 East 161st Street
Bronx, New York 10451

Dear Ms. Warner:

After considerable thought, I have decided not to accept your offer of employment with the Office of the District Attorney, Bronx County. This has been a difficult decision for me; I found your offer extremely interesting. I will be joining the firm of Ryder and Sullivan in Boston, MA.

Thank you very much for your time and consideration. Your confidence in my work is greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,

Judith L. Wright

Letter of Withdrawal from Consideration

126 Oak Street
Springfield, MA 01119
February 7, 20XX

Paula Lambert, Esq.
Hiring Committee Chair
Lambert & Pratt
562 Main Street
Springfield, MA 01114

Dear Attorney Lambert:

Thank you for considering me for the summer associate position at Lambert & Pratt. The decision was a difficult one to make, as I think very highly of your firm; however, I have accepted a position with another firm and wish to withdraw my name from further consideration by Lambert & Pratt.

Thank you very much for your time and interest. It was a great pleasure speaking with everyone at the firm.

Sincerely,

Peter Cooper

Sample "Writing Sample" Cover Sheet

Jane Frederick
65 Cambridge Road
Manchester, NH 03301
(603) 555-1234

WRITING SAMPLE

This writing sample was prepared during the spring of 20XX for a course in Federal Litigation. The assignment and a statement of the issue are attached.

The work is wholly mine and was not edited by another.

(or)

This writing sample is a portion of an appellate brief prepared for Moot Court as part of the first-year required Legal Research and Writing course. A statement of the facts and of the two issues involved in the case are presented here.

My work is the argument for the second issue: "Whether the constitutionality of a state eminent domain statute . . ."

(or)

This writing sample is a memorandum submitted to Elaine Zerbo, my supervising attorney at Zerbo, James, & Brian, P.C., on the issue of a contested will . . .

It was written in August of 20XX and used as written.

(Remember to blacken out all confidential client information, including the names of the parties or other details that would identify the particular case involved. Use a black magic marker; do not submit that copy, but make copies of it to submit as your writing sample. If submitting electronically, change or omit the identifying confidential information.)

Sample List of References

MARYELLEN SMITH

35 Harrison Avenue, Monson, MA 01069
413-555-3899
msmith@law.wnec.edu

REFERENCES

The Honorable James W. Sanderson
United States District Court for the Eastern District of New York
225 Cadman Plaza East
Brooklyn, NY 11201
212-555-8975
email@email.gov

Joan Goodwin, Esq.
Rice, Appelby, Kingman and Goodwin
36 Cinnamon Street
Boston, MA 02937
617-555-4357
email@email.com

William C. Davis
Vice President of Marketing
The Westlast Corporation
573 West Hartford Avenue
Hartford, CT 06103
203-555-6756
(Former supervisor at the Kincaid Corporation)
email@email.com

Kaitlyn Jennifer Johnson
Associate Professor of Law
Western New England University School of Law
1215 Wilbraham Road
Springfield, MA 01119
413-555-5555
email@email.edu

(Include the person's business title, address, telephone number and email. Include the relationship if it is not apparent from the reference's current contact information.)