

PROFESSIONAL COMMUNICATIONS: COVER LETTERS, REFERENCES, EMAILS, and THANK YOUS

**Professional Development
Workshop Series**

Career Development
and Internships Office (CDIO)

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x5575

It is important to be professional in your communication with networking contacts, potential internship sites, and potential employers. This workshop covers Cover Letters, References, Emails, and Thank Yous. Let's get started with the basics.

Professional Communication Basics

1. You should use a school or personal email address without any silly or cool words in it. *Example: FirstnameLastname@gmail.com, not BoobooSkinny39@hotmail.com.*
2. You should have a professional voicemail greeting on your cell phone. *Example: "Hello, you've reached First name Last name. I am unavailable now, but please leave your name and telephone number and I will return your call. Thanks!"*
3. Keep your audience in mind. Pretend you are communicating with your grandparents or President Parkyn, and be respectful. *Example: "I have TONS to do, so reply super-fast. Great!!! ;)" Instead say "I look forward to your reply."*
4. Don't use slang. *Example: S'up, or Hey.*
5. Spell check. *Example: Ywh nto?*
6. Read your written communications out loud before sending to make sure they sound natural.
7. Any printed communications, such as copies of your resume and references you take to a job interview, or your cover letter and resume to mail to an organization, should be printed on high-quality linen resume paper.

Cover Letters

- A cover letter is a supplement to your resume that includes more detailed information about yourself, highlights key points in your resume, expresses your interest in the position, and shows off your qualifications to a prospective employer.
- Research the company including website, general internet search for news or current events, reports, and even speaking with current or previous employees if you can. Find out about their mission statement, their growth or decline, and any big projects or acquisitions in process.
- Before you begin writing your cover letter, brainstorm a list of reasons about why you're the ideal candidate, and which of your skills, experiences, and qualities you want to highlight that best match the job and organization.
- Do not write more than 1 page. As you are likely competing with many other applicants, employers will not read more than one page.
- Do not repeat your resume; this is your chance to say more about the experiences that didn't fit on your resume, so give more details and background information.
- You should address the letter to a specific person at the company. You can search online to find a contact, or if you must, use "Dear Hiring Manager". Do not use "To Whom It May Concern" or "Dear Sir or Madam".
- The first paragraph should include:
 - The position you are applying for.
 - How you found out about the position, and if you found out about it from someone at the company or whom the hiring manager knows, include that name.
 - State that you believe you are an ideal fit for the role.
- The body paragraph should include:
 - References to specific points in your resume.
 - Emphasize your strongest qualifications for the role.
 - Show how these qualifications will benefit the organization you're applying to.
 - Provide examples of your measurable achievements that have benefitted previous organizations.
 - Be specific in all descriptions.
- The closing paragraph should include:
 - Restate that you are an excellent fit for the position and organization.
 - State that you would enjoy discussing the position further. Give your contact info.
 - Thank them for their consideration, and state that you will follow up with them in a week.

- Close the letter with “Sincerely”, and be sure to sign it in blue or black ink pen if you are mailing it.
- Check for correct spelling and typos—professionalism is of the utmost importance. Have someone else review the letter to ensure that it makes sense.
- Always customize the contact information and be sure to change it with each cover letter—accidentally sending it with the wrong contact information looks careless and almost guarantees that you will not get an interview!

Insert Month, Date, Year

Your First and Last Name

Street Address

City, State, Zip Code

Contact

Title, Organization

Street Address

City, State, Zip Code

Dear [Insert contact's name, or Hiring Manager],

I am writing to apply for the [insert position or title] as found on [insert website] OR as [insert referral's name] mentioned to me. My background, skills, and experiences make me an excellent fit for this position, and I am ready to add value to [insert organization].

[Insert references to specific points on your resume, emphasize your strongest qualifications, give detailed examples, and provide measurable achievements. Include a sentence about how you can help the organization be stronger or further its mission or goals with your skills, so they see how you can help them.]

Given my skills and experiences in [insert three things], I am ready to step into this role and provide value to [insert name of organization]. I would very much enjoy discussing this position further, and can be reached at [insert telephone number] or [insert email address]. Thank you in advance for your consideration, and I will follow up with you in a week to answer any questions you might have.

Sincerely,

[Insert your name]

References

- The format of a reference sheet should include your contact info, then the date written out in month date, year.
- List 3 references in the same format:
 - Name—use Mr., Dr., or Ms., not Mrs. or Miss.
 - Title—ask your reference for this so that you make sure to list it as they prefer.
 - Organization—be sure to spell and punctuate correctly.
 - Contact information—usually this means a phone number and an email address.
- Make sure to ask permission from each of your references to use them and share their contact information, and make sure all information about the reference is correct!
- It should be identical in formatting (font, type size, spacing, alignment) to your resume and cover letter. The three documents should look like a set, like they match.

Insert Month, Date, Year

Your First and Last Name

Street Address

City, State, Zip Code

REFERENCES

Ms./Mr./Dr. First and Last Name

Title

Company Name

Address

City, St Zip

(xxx) xxx-xxxx

Email address

Ms./Mr./Dr. First and Last Name

Title

Company Name

Address

City, St Zip

(xxx) xxx-xxxx

Email address

Ms./Mr./Dr. First and Last Name

Title

Company Name

Address

City, St Zip

(xxx) xxx-xxxx

Email address

Emails

- Emails should be composed as carefully as cover letters; don't think you can be careless or casual just because the communication is electronic.
- Use Mr., Dr., or Ms. to address an email just like a cover letter.
- Close emails with "Sincerely" just like a cover letter; it is acceptable to type your name.
- You should remove any signature from your email.
- You should send emails from a professional email address.
- Do not send emails very early in the morning or very late at night. The contact can see the time sent.
- You should wait a week to follow up to any email you send; it is customary for professional contacts to give a week of reply time before you try again.
- Do not use colored backgrounds, graphics, or flashy or cursive fonts in an email. You should use the same font as your resume, cover letter, and references.
- Any attachments should be sent as PDFs, not Word documents.
- Be very polite, friendly, and professional.
- If you don't understand something in the person's email to you, ask for clarification. Do not assume you understand it. It is okay to say you weren't sure of the meaning.
- Use the subject line to introduce your reason for emailing, whether that's to apply for a job or because a mutual contact suggested you reach out to him or her.

Date: Month, day, Year

From: Youremail@email.com

To: Contact@email.com

Subject: Referred to you by Gretchen Fry

Dear Mr. Contact,

Gretchen Fry, a mutual contact of ours, suggested that I speak with you. I am a recent graduate from North Park University in Chicago, IL with a Bachelors degree in Sociology. I am interested in entering the Social Work industry, and after talking with Gretchen, she suggested you might have helpful ideas for me. I am looking for feedback or ideas regarding the industries, particular organizations and anything else you think might be helpful as I pursue this goal in the greater Chicagoland area. Please let me know if and when you would be willing to connect. Thank you in advance for your consideration and I will hope to hear from you soon.

Kind regards,

Your name

Thank Yous

- After a final round interview, you should send hand-written thank you notes to each person you interviewed with. They should be written neatly in blue or black ink, and be on high-quality and professional note cards.
- The note should include the date, and address the person as they introduced themselves to you. If you can't remember how they introduced themselves, use Mr., Dr., or Ms. First names are more personal and can be used if you feel it is appropriate after the interview conversation.
- Say that you enjoyed meeting them, and reference something you discussed during the interview or a key qualification that makes you an ideal candidate.
- Close by thanking them for their time and consideration and that you wish them well, and then sign your name.
- Thank you notes should be sent as soon as possible after the interview, especially as the mail may delay the receipt of the note for a few days.
- Write the address neatly in the same ink color, and include your return address on the back of the envelope.
- Use the address on the person's business card if they gave you one; if they didn't, look up the organization's main address on the internet or possibly in the email signature when you set up the interview.

Remember that the Career Development and Internship Office is available to help you with these professional communications and many more! We are happy to review drafts of professional communications before you send or use them. Call us at x5575 or email us at careers@northpark.edu to set up an appointment.

Dear Ms. Fry,

Date

Thank you very much for your time yesterday; I enjoyed learning more about your organization and it was a pleasure getting your perspective on the role and its possibilities. I am particularly excited by the marketing component of the role and think I could bring a valuable skill set to meet your needs. Thank you again for your effort on my behalf, and I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Sincerely,

Your Name