

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

**Professional Development
Workshop Series**

Career Development
and Internships Office (CDIO)

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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 You's. 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 right 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 and be respectful. *DO NOT write: "I have TONS to do, so reply super-fast. Great!!! ;)" DO write: "I look forward to your reply."*
4. Do not use slang. *Example: S'up, or Hey.*
5. Spell check is your friend, use it!
6. Read your written communications out loud before sending to make sure they sound natural.
7. Any printed communications, such as copies of your cover letter, resume, and/or references should be printed on high-quality 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 demonstrates your qualifications to a prospective employer.
- Research the company through their website, a general internet search for news or current events, and even speaking with current or previous employees if possible. Find 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 why you are the ideal candidate, and the personal skills, experiences, and qualities you want to highlight that best match the job and organization.
- Do not write more than one 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 did not fit on your resume, so give more details and background information.
- If possible, 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”. Avoid using “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 connected to the company. Sharing their name is important!
 - Mention their mission and that you believe you are an ideal fit for the role and company.
- The second 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 are applying to.
 - Provide examples of your measurable achievements that have benefitted previous organizations (using numbers/results is powerful).
 - Be specific in all descriptions.
- The third and final paragraph should include:
 - Restate that you are an excellent fit for the position and organization.
 - State that you would enjoy discussing the position further.
 - 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 no interview!

Your Name Here

Street Address, City, State, Zip Code

Phone

Email

Month Date, Year

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,

(if mailing leave space for your signature, in black or blue ink, here)

[Insert your name]

References

- The format of a reference sheet should include your name and contact info (same format as cover letter and resume) followed by “References:” as demonstrate on next page.
- List three references in the same format:
 - Name—use Mr., Dr., or Ms., not Mrs. or Miss.
 - Title—ask your reference for this to ensure they are addressed 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 and their preferred contact information. Make sure the information is accurate!
- It should be identical in formatting (font, type size, spacing, alignment) to your resume and cover letter. The three documents should look like a complete set.

Your Name Here

Street Address, City, State, Zip Code

Phone

Email

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. Do not 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” and your name.
- 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 do not understand something in an email sent to you, ask for clarification. Do not assume you understand it. It is okay to say you were not sure of the meaning.
- Use the subject line to introduce your reason for emailing, whether that is 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 [Insert contact's name]

Dear Mr. Contact,

[Insert contact's name], 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 bachelor's degree in [insert field of study]. I am interested in entering the social work field and after talking with [insert contact's name], they suggested you might have helpful ideas for me. I am looking for feedback or ideas regarding the industry, professional organizations, or additional information you believe would be helpful as I pursue this goal. Please let me know if and when you would be willing to connect. Thank you in advance for your consideration and I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Your name

Thank You's

- After a final interview, on the day of the interview, send a quick email to thank the interviewer for his/her time.
- Within 24 hours, send handwritten 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 cards.
- The notes should include the date and address of the person as they introduced themselves to you. If you cannot 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. Use your best judgement!
- Write 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.
- Write the address neatly with the same pen 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 did not, look up the organization's main address on the internet or possibly in the email signature when you set up the interview.

The Career Development and Internship Office is available to help with these professional communications. We are happy to review drafts of professional communications before you send or use them. Call us at (773)244-5575 or email us at careers@northpark.edu.

Outline for Handwritten Letter

Dear [Insert contact's name],

Date

Thank you very much for your time yesterday. I enjoyed learning 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 believe I would bring a valuable skill set to meet your needs. Thank you again for your effort on my behalf. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Your Name