

PROJECT #3: JOB APPLICATION PACKAGE (COVER LETTER AND RESUME)

Background: Most people obtain jobs through a multi-stage process. First, you research the types of jobs you are qualified for and the types of employer you would like to work for. Then you try to convince specific employers to consider you for a job. These days, most employers have too many applicants per job to interview each one personally. These employers sort through job application packages (resumes and cover letters) to decide which applicants to consider further. Consequently, your first communication with your future employer is likely to be in writing and must persuade him or her to continue the conversation.

For this assignment you will write:

1.) Two cover letters addressed to different prospective employers and that apply for **two different** types of jobs. The letters should highlight different aspects of your experience relevant to the different jobs.

2.) Two resumes that differ significantly in content or in layout or in both. The choices of content and layout should emphasize appropriate experience for each job.

3.) A cover memo addressed to me that overviews the two jobs, reviews what you know about these particular employers, and describes how you have adapted your letter and resume to each situation. I expect you to make good use of the information in this memo in the arguments you present in your cover letters to the employers.

Directions:

Memo: Write a brief memo (2-3 pages, single spaced), addressed to me, containing a separate job description and audience analysis for each of the two jobs. It must also include an overall rhetorical analysis, highlighting how you adapted your resumes and cover letters to the different jobs. Since the memo will be of use to you in designing the rest of your package, you probably should work on it early.

1.) **Job description:** You may base your job description on job listings that you find on the Web, in a professional or trade journal, or through other resources at the Career Services office. If you cannot find a suitable job listing, you may write a hypothetical job description. The jobs should be different enough that you will have to emphasize different parts of your experience to qualify for the positions.

2.) **Audience analysis:** Investigate the particular company you are applying to. You may obtain information on many companies from the Web, the library, Career Services, etc. You may also contact the personnel office of the company directly. Then write one or two paragraphs that specify any special qualities or experience that this company may be looking for in its employees. For example, suppose you are applying for a job as a chemical engineer. A small company may be looking for an engineer who can work on a variety of projects, while another may be looking specifically for someone with experience with polymers. This is also the place to describe anything you know about the particular person you are writing to. Note: I expect you to make extensive use of this information in your cover letter. It should also have a big impact on the organization and

choice of details in your resume.

3.) **Rhetorical analysis:** Describe how you have adapted each resume and cover letter for its particular type of job, company, and reader, and why you made those changes. Normally, your reasons will be closely related to the information in the job description and audience analysis.

Resume: The purpose of the resume is to describe your qualifications for a specific *type* of job. Since this assignment requires you to apply for two different types of jobs, you will create two resumes. The resumes will overlap somewhat, but must noticeably differ in the order of presentation, content, emphasis, etc.

1.) **Content:** Your resume should include contact information and relevant details of your educational training, professional training, special accomplishments, and skills. A resume is *not* a life history. The goal is to argue that you are qualified for a particular type of job and that you would be a capable, responsible employee who communicates effectively.

2.) **Format:** Your format may be traditional or innovative as long as the information is highly accessible and is organized in a way that highlights the most important items (from the *employer's* perspective). We will look at alternative formats in class. Resumes are almost always one page long.

3.) **Style:** Your style should be fairly formal. You need not use complete sentences, but you should use a concise, attractive style.

Cover Letter: While your resume is addressed to any employer with a certain type of job opening, the cover letter is most effective when tailored to a particular employer. The purpose of the cover letter is to persuade that employer to grant you an interview. Just as you appreciate being treated as an individual rather than a statistic, so does an employer. Are you applying hit-or-miss to every company in the country? Or have you invested some effort into finding a company that you are well suited for?

1.) **Content and organization:** The opening of your letter should establish why you are writing to your reader. Be explicit about the fact you are looking for a particular kind of job and explain why you would like a job at that particular company. Preview the body of the letter by stating your major qualification for the job. The body of the letter develops each qualification with specific evidence. The goal is to show the reader both that you know what that specific company needs and that you have what it takes. You may organize this section in various ways: around your training and experience, around what the company requires, etc. The letter should close by inviting a response.

2.) **Style:** These letters are difficult to write because they aim at somewhat conflicting goals. On the one hand, you want to make a good first impression, so you want to sound polite and fairly formal. On the other hand, you want to stand out from the crowd. Otherwise, why should the employer hire you rather than any of the other applicants? The best policy is probably to talk to your reader as directly and naturally as possible. Avoid hype.

3.) **Format:** Use a conventional business letter format. Be brief: ideally, stick to one page.

Tips for Proceeding: Employers impose a strict standard of correctness on application materials. Perfection is not just desirable; it is required. Accordingly, if any letter or resume contains more than two typographical or grammatical errors, the entire package will be docked one letter grade.

Objectives: Tailoring rhetoric to meet specific audience needs; effective page design; using parallel construction; converting personal skills and abilities to benefits; persuading; conveying tone and attitude.

This assignment constitutes 25% of your overall grade.