

# WRITING SAMPLES

Occasionally employers request a writing sample to be included with the rest of your application or ask for you to bring a writing sample to an interview. Writing samples allow the employer to assess your writing and communication skills. If an employer asks for a writing sample *always* make sure to include this with your application or bring it to the interview depending on their request. A good writing sample is an easy way to stand out from other applicants.

**SPELLING AND GRAMMAR:** Make absolutely sure that everything is spelled correctly and that you are using the appropriate grammar. Do NOT simply rely on spellcheck as this may miss some mistakes. Read and re-read this piece of work to make sure that there is nothing you have missed and have friends and family read over it as well. Once you have done this take it to the Writing Center to have it read over once more.

**CONTENT:** Consider your audience and the job description. Your writing sample should be in some way related to the job and as recent as possible. If you have been out of school for several years it would be better to use something more recent or write something new. If you are still a student or have only been out of school for a year or two it is fine to submit a school paper. If you do choose to submit a paper from school make sure that is on a relevant topic and that you received a good grade on the paper. Different jobs are looking for different things and they should typically specify this in their application materials description. For example, a PR Firm may want to see examples of press releases even if you have to make them up. Or if the position is research oriented the employer most likely wants some type of research paper.

**LENGTH:** Typically keep writing samples to 2-5 pages. However, if you are applying for a legal position 8-20 pages is recommended. If you would like to use an extract from a longer piece that you have written that is fine. In this case you should put a paragraph in the beginning of your paper in order to put the paper in context.

**LAYOUT AND FORMATTING:** Keep the formatting simple and professional. One inch margins and twelve point Times New Roman font is typically preferred. Make sure to use correct citations if needed. If you are unsure of how to cite your references consult online guides on formatting. The Writing Center can assist you with this. When sending your writing sample you should save the paper as a PDF so the formatting does not change when it is sent.

## **DOS AND DON'TS:**

- DO have several people look over your writing sample both for content and spelling/grammar mistakes.
- DO send a clean copy of your paper. If you are using a school paper, do not send a paper that has comments or grades on the paper.
- DO maintain confidentiality. If you are using a paper or case that has specific names and details in it then change these in order to maintain confidentiality.
- DO read over your writing sample before your interview in case the employer references the paper.
- DO use citations and give credit to anyone who may have assisted you with the paper.
- DON'T include anything with a religious or political agenda. You do not want to submit anything too controversial.
- DON'T be overly creative.
- DON'T plagiarize.
- DON'T take full credit for a paper you did not do completely on your own. Always credit anyone else involved.