

Assignment 2: Job Application Package

Most people obtain jobs through a multi-stage process. First you research the types of jobs you are qualified for and the types of employers you would like to work for. Then you try to convince specific employers to consider you for a job. Most employers have too many applicants per job to interview each personally. These employers sort through job application packages (resumes and cover letters) to decide which applicants to consider further. So 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:

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.

Two resumes that should differ in content or in layout or both. The choices of content and layout should emphasize appropriate experience for each job. The resumes need not be drastically different, but they cannot be identical, and you will need to justify the choices made in each.

A reflection memo addressed to me that overviews the two jobs, reviews what you know about these particular employers, and (most importantly) describes the strategies and tactics you have used to adapt your letter and resume to each situation.

The reflection memo and the collected job application materials are of equal weight in this assignment, so you should take both very seriously. Assignment 2 is worth 20% of your final grade in the course. The reflection memo is worth 10%, and the application materials considered together are worth 10%.

Reflection Memo

Write a brief memo (approximately two single-spaced pages, no more than three) addressed to me that will help me read, understand, evaluate, and “coach” your resumes and cover letters. For each of the two jobs, the memo must contain a separate job description and audience analysis (an analysis of the potential employer). Your discussion of each position should contain in-depth commentary highlighting how you adapted your resumes and cover letters to the different jobs. I suggest that you begin drafting the cover memo right away and continue to revise it throughout the process. You should look over it carefully at the very end of the project to make sure that it tells me “how to read” your resumes and cover letters. **Take the cover memo seriously, as it will be worth half of your grade for the overall assignment.**

Memo Format: You’ve already written one memo for this course, so apply Markel’s lessons about effective memo design when composing this text.

Job Description. You may base your job description on job listings that you find in a professional or trade journal, on the Internet, or in other resources on campus at Career Services. **The jobs should be different enough that you will have to emphasize different parts of your experience to qualify for the positions.** Note that you must hand in copies of the job ads you use. Assignment #1 asked you to analyze a job ad in terms of Markel's characteristics of technical communication; Assignment #2 asks you to mine the job ads for any useful details that would help you apply for the position.

Audience Analysis. Investigate the particular companies you are applying to. You may obtain information on companies from the library, on the Internet, from Career Services, or other places. 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 who has 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 use of this information in your cover letter. It might also have a big impact on the organization and choice of details in your resume.**

Rhetorical Analysis. Describe how you 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. This is the most important section of the reflection and will likely receive the most space.

Resume

The purpose of the resume is to describe your qualifications for a type of job. Since this assignment requires you to apply for two somewhat different jobs, you should create two somewhat different resumes.

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, and personable employee who communicates effectively.

Format. The resume should be organized in such a way that highlights the most important information—from the employer's perspective. See Markel for more on resume formats.

Style. Your style should be fairly formal. You need not use complete sentences, but you should use a concise, **active style** and show **consistency** in expression from section to section.

Cover Letter

The purpose of the cover letter is to persuade a specific employer to grant you an interview. Just as you appreciate being treated as an individual rather than as 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?

Content and Organization. The opening of your letter should establish why you are writing to your reader. Be explicit about the fact that you are looking for a particular kind of job and explain why you would like to work at that particular company. Preview the body of the letter by stating your major qualifications for the job; use a forecasting statement. 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 job or the company requires, or some other way. The letter should close by inviting a response.

Style. Cover 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.

Format. Use a conventional business letter format. Limit yourself to one page.

Standards for Correctness

Employers impose strict standards of correctness on application materials: An error is the equivalent of a bad spot on your shirt. Accordingly, I will mark this assignment on a somewhat stricter scale than usual. **If any letter or resume contains more than two typographical or grammatical errors, I reserve the right to dock the entire package one letter grade.** I will dock the package even more if there are numerous typographical or grammatical errors.

(See the next page for a list of my grading criteria on this assignment.)

Grading Criteria

Reflection Memo

- Analysis of Job Description and Potential Employer
- Detailed Description of Rhetorical Choices made in the Job Application Materials
- Effective Memo Format and Design
- Organization of Content
- Style and Correctness

Cover Letters

- Cover Letter Format (any significant departures from Markel's model should be justified and sufficiently explained in your own Reflection Memo)
- Effective Examples in body paragraphs
- Appropriateness of Cover Letters for Job Postings
- Style: Sentences are well written. Active voice is used throughout.
- Standards for Correctness

Resumes

- Resume Format (any significant departures from Markel's model should be justified and sufficiently explained in your own Reflection Memo)
- Appropriateness of Resumes for Job Postings
- Standards for Correctness