COVER LETTERS

Cover Letter Do’s & Don’t’s

DO:
• Customize your cover letter to target the specific employer.
• Make your cover letter one page. Be succinct.
• Use a colon rather than a comma on the salutation line.
• Tell who you are, what position you are seeking and why you are interested in the position.
• Highlight areas of your resume that demonstrate skills and experience appropriate to the prospective employer.
• Provide specific examples to back-up any employment characteristics you are describing. “My research and writing skills are being enhanced through service on Loyola of Los Angeles Law Review.”
• Tell the employer how you can contribute to their business, rather than what they can do for you.
• Use all basic rules of grammar (see DON’T’s below).
• Use two spaces after each period.
• Include your signature when you send out hard copies of your cover letter.
• PROOFREAD your cover letter and have someone else review it, too.

DON’T:
• Use “Dear Sir or Madam.” Always address the letter to a person by name. If the contact’s name is not on the website, check on http://www.nalpdirectory.com/. If you still can’t find a name, call the employer.
• Use the person’s first name in the salutation (e.g. Dear Jane Doe).
• Use adjectives that oversell your abilities (e.g. exceptional writing skills, extensive legal experience, impeccable attention to detail).
• Lecture the employer on “what it takes” to be a good lawyer or why their firm is great.
• Switch verb tense.
• End a sentence with a preposition.
• Use the passive voice.
• Overuse the word “I” or repeat the same phrases over and over again.
• Simply repeat your resume job descriptions verbatim in your cover letter.
• Use an arrogant tone or be presumptive (e.g. Please call to schedule an interview)
• Forget to include “Enclosure(s)” after your name if you are enclosing additional documents such as your resume, writing sample or transcript.
• Use capital letters, bolded fonts, or italics for emphasis.
• Use negative phrases: “Although my legal experience is minimal…”