A critical part of the job (or internship) search process is the communication you. Whether you are sending a brief message via email or a standard cover letter, what better way to showcase your ability than through well-written correspondence! After all, one of the most valued skills employers seek is strong communication.

All correspondence regardless of format (email, letter, other) should maintain a respectful tone. It may be more conversational – as is often a part of email – or more formal, such as with a cover letter, but always professional! Do not use text speak (e.g., b4 u go, thx!, lol), profanity, or emoticons/emojis.

If sending a formal written letter, keep in mind these basic business letter guidelines:

- When writing a letter that will be printed, use the same high-quality paper for your letter and your resume. Choose an 8 ½” X 11”, light paper with a smooth finish, typically white or off-white.
- Use the same letterhead for your correspondence as you use on your resume.
- Print on only one side of the paper.
- All correspondence should be neat in appearance and pleasing to the eye.
- Triple check for spelling, grammar, punctuation, and typographical errors.
- Always ask someone (maybe 2 or 3 people) to proofread your documents.
- Keep all correspondence relevant. “What does the reader need to know?”
- Be sincere and polite.
- Remember to sign your correspondence. < Insert an image of your handwritten signature for a more “personalized” touch.

**COVER LETTERS** serve as an introduction when you are first reaching out or applying for an opportunity, such as a job or internship. The goal is to spark the reader’s interest to learn more about you!

There are several variations of cover letters, but the three most common types include:

**Inquiry Letters** are written when inquiring as to the possibility for a position with an employer. Focus on broad occupational or organizational dimensions to describe how your qualifications match the work environments.

**Standard Cover Letters (aka: Application letters)** are used when applying for a specific position. The purpose is to incite the reader to read your resume, which may then generate an interview. As such, the letter should demonstrate that your skills meet the requirements and qualifications of the position.

**Networking Letters** are helpful tools in your job search. This type of correspondence is used when a contact, known by the employer, has recommended that you write. It may also be a letter to a person you may have met at a conference, meeting, or other venue. The networking letter can serve as an introduction, a request for an informational interview, or a letter to establish contact.

All job search correspondence should be cordial and express appreciation. Remember that your correspondence creates a lasting impression. Good letter-writing skills are essential and will benefit you throughout your professional life.

**FOLLOW-UP LETTERS** are used after you apply for an opportunity or started the interview process.

**Thank-You Letters** are sent as a professional courtesy and as a method of establishing communication and goodwill with a company or contact. Thank-you letters are one of the most important, yet one of the least used, tools in a job search. To whom should you write a thank-you letter? The basic rule of thumb is that anyone who helps you in any way should receive a thank-you letter. For example, they may be written following a Career Fair contact, after receiving assistance from a networking contact, in response to phone conversations or informational interviews, and for those who provided references. **Always send a thank-you letter within 24 hours of an interview.** In addition to thanking the interviewer for the time investment, a post-interview thank-you letter may also be used to provide additional information or to clarify a point from the interview.
Acknowledgement letters are sent to confirm an invitation, such as to interview or to attend an event, as well as to confirm an offer received.

- In the case of a site visit or informational interview, be sure to include the date(s) -- either ones that are convenient for you or reiterating those currently scheduled.
- If sending after receiving a job offer, express your appreciation for the offer and the company’s interest in you. Restate the title of the position and salary. Indicate or confirm the date you will notify the employer of your decision.

Refusal letters (aka: “No thank you” letters) are written when you are declining an offer, such as for a job or admission to graduate school. Express appreciation for the offer and the organization’s interest in you. Indicate that you have carefully considered the offer and have decided not to accept it. Be polite and positive. You never know what the future holds, so demonstrating respect for the reader and the organization helps to showcase you as a professional with possible potential.

Letters seeking additional information may be written if you are awaiting an offer, or if you have received an offer but need additional information. Indicate your acceptance of the offer of employment. Indicate your interest in the employer. Be specific about the information or response you need. Express your appreciation for the cooperation you anticipate.

Acceptance letters are written when you received the job offer to which your answer is “yes!” The letter can be relatively short, but needs to directly state your acceptance. Reiterate the position title, compensation offered, and the starting date, if established. Refer to the date of the original offer. Indicate any travel plans and arrival date if relocation is required.

Withdrawal letters are sent once you accepted a position with another organization. It is respectful of their time or effort to withdraw your application from consideration. You do not have to state the reason for withdrawing, but many find it helpful to know that your decision to accept employment with another organization was based on a better fit at this point in your career. Keeping the tone respectful and positive is expected.