

## ELEMENTS OF A TYPICAL APPLICATION PACKAGE

As you begin your job search, you will notice several documents are commonly requested: a **cover letter**, **legal resume**, **references**, **writing sample**, and **law school transcript**. In the sections that follow, we will provide guidance on how to prepare these materials.

### BASIC COVER LETTER GUIDELINES

- A cover letter should accompany every resume you send out unless the employer specifically requests otherwise. Many legal employers refuse to give a resume a second look if it is not accompanied by a cover letter. The cover letter is a written introduction to you and your resume and provides an opportunity to highlight your most relevant skills and genuine interest.
- There are two objectives when writing a cover letter: First and foremost, the cover letter is meant to sell the applicant to potential employers - the letter should be active, professional, and friendly at the same time. Second, the cover letter allows the applicant to demonstrate his or her writing and editing skills - syntax and spelling in a cover letter must be flawless.
- There are two types of cover letters; letters of application and letters of inquiry. A **letter of application** is written to apply to a specific opening. A **letter of inquiry** is written to explore potential employment opportunities. For example, you may desire to work for a large downtown firm that does not have a position posted or advertised. You can send or hand-deliver a letter of inquiry, stating your interest in future openings. Your resume should always accompany a letter of application or a letter of inquiry.
- Make your cover letter personal. This is time-consuming, but well worth the effort. **A cover letter should not be addressed to a generic entity such as “Hiring Partner” or “To Whom it May Concern”**. Instead, call the firm or entity and ask to whom you should send your application materials. Application materials addressed to a real person make your letter look more like an important piece of correspondence and less like junk mail.
- Give the employer exactly what they are looking for. For instance, if the firm has indicated that it seeks someone with litigation experience, make sure you specifically mention your litigation experience and/or training.
- If you have a geographic link to the city where the employer is located, make that very clear in your cover letter. Many firms are reluctant to invest time and money in a law student/lawyer that they deem likely to leave the area after the summer or after a few years, as the case may be. This is especially true of firms outside of major cities.
- Your cover letter should provide a brief highlight of your qualifications and accomplishments. It should never be longer than one page.
- Again, **cover letters must be perfect**. Consider this your first writing sample. Throughout the typical law firm hiring process, a cover letter may be reviewed by several members of the firm, as well as by pre-screeners and human resources staff. Any errors will be found and will undoubtedly work against you.

## COVER LETTER GUIDE

### Letterhead

- Prepare personal letterhead using the **same format** and information as that used in the heading of your legal resume.
- Use professional grade resume paper for **both** your resume and cover letter.

### Introductory Paragraph

- If you have a connection to the employer, identify the connection in your opening sentence.
  - Ex. *“At the suggestion of Professor Smith, Professor of Law at the University of Toledo College of Law, I am writing to.....”*
- Introduce yourself.
  - Ex. *“I am a second year student at the University of Toledo College of Law.”*
- State your intent.
  - Ex. *“I am writing to submit my resume for the purpose of obtaining a Summer Associate/Law Clerk/Externship position with...”*

### Second Paragraph (“Why Them”)

- Demonstrate your knowledge of the employer by mentioning an interest in one of the firm’s practice areas, clients, or acknowledge a recent court victory or an award/honor received by the firm.
- Identify any geographic connection you have to the employer.
  - Ex. *“I am a permanent resident of the State of Michigan and seek to return upon graduation.”*

### Third Paragraph (“Why You”)

- Highlight relevant work experience and/or coursework and demonstrate how your specific experiences translate into transferable skills which will be of use to the employer.
  - Ex. *“My past experience working for Lucas County Job and Family Services as a caseworker has provided me with excellent experience in listening to and identifying the needs of clients.”*
- Demonstrate why you are the best applicant for the position by highlighting relevant personal accomplishments or attributes.
  - Ex. *“My strong writing skills have been enhanced through service on the University of Toledo Law Review.”*

### Closing Paragraph

- Summarize your letter, and point the reader towards your resume.
- Close the letter and thank the reader for their time.
  - Ex. *“I would be pleased to have the opportunity to interview with you for the position. Thank you for your consideration.”*
- Let the employer know that you intend to follow-up with them.
  - Ex. *“I will be calling within the next two weeks to ensure your receipt of these materials and to discuss the possibility of arranging an interview.”*
- Sign your cover letter.

## COVER LETTER QUICK TIPS

- Create an individualized cover letter for every resume you send. Replace “your firm” with the name of the individual employer throughout.
- Be honest and professional.
- If you use a word (“I”, “It”, Etc...) more than three or four times to start a sentence, alter your sentence structure so the word “I” is eliminated.
- **Double-check** for errors in spelling, grammar, or punctuation – employers use your cover letter to assess your communication and writing abilities and any errors WILL count against you.
- Research the employer before writing.
- Indicate your specific interest in the particular position or organization.
- Address the letter to a specific person, not “To Whom it May Concern”.
- Don’t re-state details from your resume when describing your qualifications.
- Refer the reader to your enclosures (resume, portfolio, writing samples, etc.).

## COVER LETTER FAQ’S:

### How do I personalize my cover letters?

- Personalization is essential. At a minimum, you should communicate why you are interested in working for this firm; why this city is appealing to you etc. A firm website, [www.nalpdirectory.com](http://www.nalpdirectory.com) and [www.martindale.com](http://www.martindale.com) are all good information sources.

**Sample cover letters follow; please use them as GUIDES ONLY.**

**SAMPLE COVER LETTER (1L Firm)**

**FAITH FIRSTYEAR**

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100 Belle Avenue • Maumee, OH 43604 • 419-112-1212 • [fran08@utoledo.edu](mailto:fran08@utoledo.edu)

December 1, 2009

Virginia A. Panario, Esq.  
Panario, Smith & Jones  
1899 Grand Street  
Columbus, OH 44768

Dear Ms. Panario:

I am a first year law student at The University of Toledo College of Law, and am writing to apply for a summer law clerk position with Panario, Smith & Jones.

I have a special interest in your firm's specialties of tax and estate planning. I have a bachelor's degree in accounting and have passed one part of the CPA exam. In addition, I am from the Columbus, OH area and hope to return after graduation.

My ultimate goal is to become a tax attorney. The two years I spent as an internal auditor at Proctor and Winter and my undergraduate internship with Ernst and Henry have provided me with a foundation of experience on which to build a legal career. My resume is enclosed for your review.

I would appreciate your consideration of my qualifications and am available to interview at your convenience. I will be in Columbus over my holiday break from Dec. 17<sup>th</sup> – January 4<sup>th</sup>.

Sincerely,

Faith Firstyear

**SAMPLE COVER LETTER (1L Public Interest)**

**FRANKLIN F. FIRSTYEAR**

123 South Avenue  
Toledo, OH 32222  
(419) 123-1234  
[firstyearf@utoledo.edu](mailto:firstyearf@utoledo.edu)

James K. Smith, Esq.  
Director of Legal Recruitment  
Franklin County District Attorney's Office  
123 E. Broad Street  
Columbus, OH 43287

Dear Mr. Smith,

I am a first year law student at the University of Toledo College of Law and am very interested in working next summer as a legal intern in the Franklin County District Attorney's Office.

I would like to work as a criminal prosecutor and believe that working in your office would be an invaluable step toward that goal. Serving as a legal intern would also allow me to contribute my advocacy skills to your office.

While an undergraduate at Ohio University, I served on the Student Government as the co-director of women's issues. This role allowed me to promote gender equality while developing my leadership skills and organizational abilities. During my undergraduate career, I also represented students appearing before the Judicial Board as a student advocate. This experience greatly contributed to my desire to pursue a career as a trial attorney, in part because I witnessed the crucial role that attorneys play in ensuring justice for all parties in need of representation in legal proceedings.

I believe I could make a substantial contribution to your office if offered the opportunity. I hope to meet with you in person to discuss my qualifications for a position with the Franklin County District Attorney's Office. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Franklin Firstyear

**SAMPLE COVER LETTER (2L Firm)**

**Reginald Zalski**

1486 Wilhams Court • Springtown, Illinois 61820 • 417-225-5876 • rzalski@utoledo.edu

September 1, 2009

John Walker, Esq.  
Smith, Johnson and Walker  
Suite 1800  
One IBM Plaza  
Chicago, Illinois 60601

Dear Mr. Walker:

I am a second year student at The University of Toledo College of Law, and I am interested in the possibility of working with your firm as a law clerk next summer. I have enclosed my resume and a writing sample for your review.

I am particularly interested in your firm because of its emphasis on litigation. I was selected to represent the college on its National Moot Court Team and plan to take Trial Practice during my third year in law school.

My undergraduate degree is from Wittenton College in Evanston, Illinois. The four years I spent in your area convinced me that I would like to establish a legal career in Chicago.

I will be visiting friends in Chicago the second week of October and will call your office in the hope of scheduling an interview. Thank you for taking the time to consider my qualifications.

Sincerely yours,

Reginald Zalski

Enclosure

**SAMPLE COVER LETTER (2L Firm)**

**SALLY SECONDYEAR**

2501 South Avenue

Toledo, Ohio 54321

419/666-1866

[second@utoledo.edu](mailto:second@utoledo.edu)

August 7, 2009

Alice Radu, Esq.  
Polk Edison & MacMurray  
506 W. Beech Street  
Kalamazoo, Michigan 45890

Dear Ms. Radu:

Please accept this letter and the accompanying resume as an expression of interest in securing summer employment at Polk Edison & MacMurray. As you will note from my resume, all my work and education prior to law have been in the State of Michigan. I ultimately hope to practice there and plan to take the July 2010 Michigan Bar Exam.

In my year and a half as a law student at The University of Toledo, I have maintained an exemplary academic record and received numerous scholastic honors such as Dean's List recognition and selection as an Associate Member of Law Review.

An undergraduate degree in finance and over four years of experience as a Credit Analyst for Society Bank of Detroit have provided me with business-related skills to complement my legal education. My tenure as an intern with the Toledo Public Defender's Office has likewise provided me an opportunity to apply my legal skills and gain valuable courtroom experience.

Thank you for considering me.

Sincerely,

Sally Secondyear

## SAMPLE COVER LETTER (3L- Clerkship)

Amy S. Adams  
123 Parkway Court  
San Diego, CA 22910  
[adams@utoledo.edu](mailto:adams@utoledo.edu)

September 3, 2009

The Hon. Williams Q. Hayes  
United States District Court  
940 Front Street  
San Diego, CA 92101

Dear Judge Hayes:

I am a third year law student at the University of Toledo College of Law and also a San Diego native. I have a strong interest in civil and criminal litigation and would very much like to be considered for the opportunity to work as your law clerk.

Throughout law school I have worked in a number of areas of law, gaining experience relating to the varying cases handled by your court. Over the past two summers I have worked with two public defenders offices and an environmental law firm. With the Wood County Public Defender's office, I assisted with felony arraignments, researched and wrote memoranda for my supervising attorney, and interviewed prospective expert witnesses. With the Lucas County Public Defender's office last summer, I handled a full caseload identical to that of a new attorney because of a budget shortfall. I conducted client meetings, prepared motions, handled arraignments, represented clients at hearings and even went to trial. I have also worked with the Ohio Environmental Law Center twice in the past two years, preparing research memoranda and portions of arguments to be submitted to a Federal District Court.

I am also very active in my school community. As an officer in the Native American Law Student Association for three years, I arranged and coordinated events to expose the student body to Indian law. These included a visit to the school by the Navajo Supreme Court to hear arguments before the Court. I am also currently writing a case comment on the controversial *Harjo v. NFL* opinion covering administrative, trademark and First Amendment issues, and hope to publish this article in the coming year.

I would appreciate the opportunity to discuss my background and skill set with you. If I can provide any additional information, don't hesitate to contact me. Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully,

Amy S. Adams

**SAMPLE COVER LETTER (3L Firm)**

7088 Oakwood  
Temperance, MI 48182  
313/847-2222  
[mlewanski@utoledo.edu](mailto:mlewanski@utoledo.edu)

March 5, 2010

Mark Hopperton  
Hopperton, Wentzel & Smith  
156 E. State Street, Suite 300  
Indianapolis, IN 46204

Dear Mr. Hopperton:

I am a third year student at The University of Toledo College of Law and am interested in an associate position with your firm.

Although I currently reside in and attend law school in Ohio, I am actually an Indiana native. I grew up in the greater Muncie area and earned my undergraduate degree at Indiana University. I am very anxious to return to Indiana to begin practicing, and I will be taking the Indiana Bar Exam in July.

At the University of Toledo College of Law I have earned a grade point average of 3.5 on a 4.0 scale, and I rank eighteenth in a class of 145. I am a member of the Law Review, and this year I am the Student Articles Editor. If all goes well in my final semester, I anticipate graduating magna cum laude. I have also gained valuable practical experience as a law clerk at Brown, Slater & Zinger, a well-respected litigation firm in Toledo. I have been with the firm for over a year now, and I work approximately 20 hours per week. As a clerk I have had the opportunity to write briefs, motions, complaints and legal memoranda. Through this experience and my participation on Law Review, I have developed excellent research and writing skills.

I have enclosed a copy of my resume for your review. I look forward to meeting you and discussing my qualifications in greater detail. I will be in the Indianapolis area on Friday, April 7 and will be available to meet with you. Otherwise, I can return to the area at your convenience.

Sincerely,

Mary Lewanski

## **SAMPLE COVER LETTER (3L Business/Finance)**

### **TIFFANY THIRDYEAR**

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26 Charles Drive, Toledo, OH 43612, (419) 537-2916, [thirdyear@utoledo.edu](mailto:thirdyear@utoledo.edu)

November 24, 2009

John Barrett, Vice-President  
5th Second Bank  
1090 Eagle Drive  
Detroit, MI 48162

Dear Mr. Barrett:

The trust position open with your financial institution has come to my attention through the Michigan Lawyers Weekly listing. I believe that my background in banking, as well as my demonstrated academic success, makes me a strong candidate for the position.

Before coming to law school, I spent three years working for Ohio Bancorp, formerly Security Bancorp. During those three years, I progressed from mailroom clerk to utility teller and clerk. In the course of my employment, I was exposed to all areas of banking and was required to have a working knowledge of those areas at all times, as I was subject to working in those areas as needed.

During this time, I developed an interest in banking and finance, and specifically the trust area, and tried to tailor my finance degree to allow me exposure to the areas of financial institution analysis, investments and estate planning. I have continued to remain current in happenings in these areas and, to the extent possible, to have specialized in these areas during law school as well.

Throughout law school, I have tried to concentrate my course work on the areas of business and commercial law, including but not limited to the areas of securities regulation, corporate finance, estate planning, and taxation. In addition, I have recently published an article analyzing a recent Supreme Court decision in terms of its prospective effect on securities litigation.

I believe my interests and experiences make me a strong candidate for the position open with your institution and I would be delighted to come to your offices to further discuss my qualifications. I hope to hear from you soon.

Most cordially yours,

Tiffany Thirdyear

**SAMPLE COVER LETTER (3L Business/Finance)**

150 Riverside Drive  
Toledo, Ohio 23451  
419-455-0912  
[msmith@utoledo.edu](mailto:msmith@utoledo.edu)

August 15, 2009

Sarah Jacobson  
Personnel Director  
First National Bank of Cleveland  
920 West 44th Street  
Cleveland, OH 53610

Dear Ms. Jacobson:

I am responding to your posting with The University of Toledo Office of Professional Development. I was very pleased to read about your position because I hope to begin my career in a legal department of a growing financial institution such as yours. My undergraduate college years in the Cleveland area convinced me that Cleveland is an excellent location.

I will be a May 2010 law school graduate (upper 25%) with a strong commercial and business law background. I have taken all the courses dealing with the Uniform Commercial Code, including Commercial Paper and Secured Transactions. In addition, I am completing six semester hours of Business Associations and a Business Organization Seminar. You will also note from my resume that I gained practical legal experience during law school by clerking for a law firm with bank clients and by interning for a circuit court judge.

I would be glad to meet with you at your convenience to discuss my qualifications in greater detail. I look forward to your reply.

Sincerely yours,

Mary Smith

**SAMPLE COVER LETTER (Recent Grad)**

1219 Shaw Avenue  
Monroe, MI 48117  
734/249-6161  
[jchiles@utoledo.edu](mailto:jchiles@utoledo.edu)

June 10, 2009

The Honorable Douglas B. Moylan  
Office of the Attorney General  
Guam Judicial Center, Suite 2-200E  
Hagata, GU 96910 USA

Dear Attorney General Moylan:

I am a graduate of the University of Toledo College of Law and am writing to apply for the child support attorney position at the Office of the Attorney General of Guam. The child support attorney position interests me because I believe it is important to ensure that parents take responsibility for providing financial support to their children. In particular, working in Guam in this capacity appeals to me because I grew up in Honduras and Kenya, and understand the importance of guaranteeing impoverished children a means of support.

As my resume indicates, I have strong academic credentials and graduated 20th in my class. I have supplemented my studies with litigation exposure by clerking for Judge Maureen McKnight of the Brooke County Circuit Court. Judge McKnight's docket includes the family law rotation, child support enforcement, FAPA, violation of restraining orders, and probation violation hearings. I have had the responsibility of running the courtroom, writing and distributing the paperwork, and communicating with the parties during these proceedings. I have learned a great deal about child support enforcement from the attorneys and my supervising Judge.

Additionally, my work experience during law school has familiarized me with the skills needed to practice law effectively. I interned at Wood County Legal Aid, where I successfully negotiated settlements for several restraining and stalking order cases. I also engaged in trial preparation for termination of parental rights cases at the Ohio Department of Justice, Family Law Section, and worked at Archer Hart Lashway & Heshner, where I took on the responsibility of initiating lawsuits for new clients by identifying claims, writing demand letters, and drafting complaints. This hands-on experience has given me the opportunity to practice and develop my advocacy skills, which in turn will make me a more effective lawyer.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Jackie Chiles

## **SAMPLE COVER LETTER (Graduate)**

*(Submitted for Office of Professional Development "Blind" posting – only use "Hiring Partner" when you absolutely cannot find the person's proper name)*

101 Forest Ave., Apt. 2  
Maumee, Ohio 43410  
(419) 222-2812  
[treehugger@gmail.com](mailto:treehugger@gmail.com)

August 21, 2009

Dear Hiring Partner:

The Office of Professional Development at The University of Toledo College of Law recently posted a position announcement for an attorney with interest and experience in environmental law. My resume is enclosed for your review.

I was involved in the University of Toledo Environmental Law Society during each of my three years in law school, first as secretary, and later as treasurer. I attended the 2007 National Association of Environmental Law Societies conference in New Orleans where I attended seminars on amendments to the Clean Air Act, the "no net loss of wetlands" policy, as well as an overview of CERCLA.

In addition to my extracurricular exposure to environmental law, I received an A in Professor Thomas A. Trench's environmental law course. This course concentrated on CERCLA, RCRA, the SARA amendments to CERCLA, the Clean Air Act and the Clean Water Act. *(NOTE-these acronyms would only be proper if this employer would have reason to be very familiar with them)*

Along with completing a Bachelor of Arts degree in political science, I took considerable course work in chemistry and biology. I believe my science classes, coupled with my degrees in political science and law, have enabled me to understand and appreciate the complexities of environmental problems and legislation.

I look forward to the opportunity to discuss with you my qualifications to practice environmental law.

Sincerely yours,

Tricia A. Treehugger

**COVER LETTER (to a UT Law Alumni Contact)**

**Jerold Thiebert**

259 Elmhurst  
Toledo, Ohio 43615

419/821-6999

[jthiebert@utoledo.edu](mailto:jthiebert@utoledo.edu)

March 10, 2009

Jane Swartz, Esq.  
Swartz Hunter and Winsky  
1090 Eagle Point  
Orlando, Florida 12345

Dear Ms. Swartz:

I will graduate May 15 from The University of Toledo College of Law. As an alumna who is well established in Orlando, I am hopeful that you can give me tips on relocating to your city. On June 1, my wife and I are moving to Orlando where I will study for the Florida Bar.

There is an atmosphere of optimism and civic pride in your city that is particularly refreshing. Another factor behind my desire to relocate is the fact that I have many relatives in the State of Florida. Although we evaluated several cities both in the State of Florida and in other states, Orlando proved the best combination of climate and opportunity. To aid in relocation to Orlando, my wife has transferred her employment there and will begin her new position June 15.

Through my education and work in the field, I have received a great deal of experience in analyzing and writing in the law, especially in labor and employment law. I am looking for a position that can provide me with the opportunity to utilize this experience, while also allowing me to continue learning and growing as an attorney. I feel that my training, education, and maturity could be very beneficial to your firm.

I am confident that I can make a successful transition to both a new city and a new position. I would welcome a chance to meet with you to discuss opportunities in Orlando.

Sincerely,

Jerold Thiebert