

Email Etiquette in the job search

E-mail has traditionally been used as an informal means of communication. However, as it becomes increasingly popular in the job application process, you need to take time to think through the content of your e-mails and address the message that you might be sending to employers.

Although employers don't always read an entire cover letter the first time, they do expect the writer to take the time to include the necessary information in an appropriate way. The following guidelines should be used for e-mail when writing or responding to: potential employers, co-workers, colleagues, business members, and college staff or personnel. You will be taken more seriously and will often be given more credibility. Common mistakes include:

- Using emoticons (:0)
- Being too informal
- Misspellings and poor grammar
- No capitalization
- Spellings words how they sound

Professional e-mail is very different from casual e-mail or instant messenger. Here are some guidelines to consider when writing an e-mail in which you are job prospecting or applying for a job:

- Always introduce yourself the same way you would in a cover letter. Dear Mr./Ms. So and So, I am writing in regard to your posting on...for XYZ position in Financial Services.
- Treat your e-mails as if you were writing a professional cover or thank you letter on paper, but be brief.
- An e-mail to an employer should never just say "see attached." The receiver may not even open the attachment.
- In the subject line, make it obvious why you are writing: "Application for XYZ" position.
- Make sure you change the contact name and content according to the person and company to whom you are sending the message.
- If you are responding to an e-mail, include the original message in the reply, so the receiver can put your e-mail into the correct context. Also, respond within 2 business days.
- Always spell words correctly.
- Don't just use spell check. It won't catch words that are spelled correctly, but are misused within the context of the sentence.
- Never use all capital letters. It can be implied that you are screaming. It is also difficult to read.
- Think about the message an e-mail address can send. Keep it simple and avoid names similar to "studmuffin" or "partygirl."
- Read your message carefully. The tone of an e-mail can often be misinterpreted by the way the e-mail is written.
- Have someone else proofread it before you send it. It may be easier to find errors if you print and review it.
- Prior to attaching your resume, scan it for viruses!
- Name your document "your name, resume." Employers receive hundreds of resumes via e-mail. If you follow-up by asking if they received it, they won't want to take the time to look through 300 attachments called "resume."
- If you are attaching your resume, ask the receiver if they would prefer that you send it in a different format, that is: Word Perfect, rich text format, or a .pdf file.
- Do not assume that if an employer is informal that you should be.
- **Don't rely just on e-mail. E-mails can be lost.** Follow-ups can be done via the telephone or regular mail.

Your e-mail can be a brief introduction:

To: xtzperson@accompany.org
From: ggoodwin@wisc.edu
Subject: Application for summer internship

Dear Ms. XYZ,

I am writing in response to the posting on Jobweb.com for a summer information systems/technology internship at ABC Company (Job #123). Please accept my attached resume and letter as an application for this position. My skills and experience closely fit the posted job description, and I hope to hear from you soon.

Thank you,

Gracie Goodwin

Or your e-mail can be your cover letter:

To: xyzperson@accompany.org
From: ggoodwin@wisc.edu
Subject: Application for summer internship

Dear Ms. XYZ,

I am writing in response to the posting on Jobweb.com for a summer information systems/technology internship at ABC Company (Job #123). Please accept my attached resume as an application for this position.

My experience and personality closely fit the posted job description, and I am very excited to apply. As a Computer Information Systems student at Clarke College, I have taken advantage of numerous research and design opportunities on campus and in class, which may be useful when working at ABC Company. During my web design class, I volunteered to organize a group that would design and create a web site using Flash technology for a local company. The project was well-received and the organization is using some of our ideas. As a student worker in the Counseling Center, I also designed an Access database to track student counseling appointments and progress. The position required a high degree of confidentiality as well as a person with the ability to work on the project until it was completed.

In addition to maintaining a 3.0 GPA and holding an on-campus job, I have also participated in various campus activities and leadership programs. By working on committees, I was able to demonstrate my leadership, teamwork, and time-management skills, which can be useful in a professional setting like ABC Company.

I am eager to learn more about the internship position and would appreciate the opportunity to speak with you in an interview about my qualifications. I am available to work from May 10 through August 15, 2003 and can be reached at 608-588-1234. I look forward to hearing from you. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Gracie Goodwin