

Formal Emails to Accompany Job Applications

In the job application process, you need to take time to think through the content of your emails and the message that you might be sending to employers. Although employers do not 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 email when writing or responding to: Potential employers, coworkers, 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 😊
- Being too informal (hey there!)
- Misspellings and poor grammar

Professional email is very different from casual email or instant messenger. Here are some guidelines to consider when writing an email 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. LastName, I am writing regarding your posting on for XYZ position in the Department of Health Services
- Treat your emails as if you were writing a professional cover or thank you letter, but be brief
- An email 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 email, include the original message in the reply, so the receiver can put your email into the correct context. Also, respond within 2 business days
- Always spell words correctly. Don’t rely solely on 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 email address can send. Your firstname.lastname@URL.com is best
- Read your message carefully. The tone of an email can often be misinterpreted by the way the email is written
- Have someone else proofread it before you send it. It may be easier to find errors if you print and review it
- Name your document “your last name, resume.” Employers receive hundreds of resumes via email. 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 for policy analyst”
- If you are attaching your resume, ask the receiver if they would prefer that you send it in a different format, that is: PDF, Word, or some other format
- Do not assume that if an employer is informal that you should be
- Don’t rely just on email. Emails can be lost. Follow-ups can be done via the telephone

Your email can be a brief introduction (as shown below), or you can paste your email into the body of the email itself rather than as an attachment:

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

Dear Ms. LastName:

I am writing in response to the posting on Policy Jobs for a summer policy internship at ABC Think Tank (Job #123). Please accept the attached resume and cover letter in a single PDF document as requested as an application for this position. If you need anything further, please do not hesitate to contact me. I hope to hear from you soon.

Thank you,
Gracie Goodwin