

Tips and Suggestions on How to Correctly Write a Cover Letter and Curriculum Vitae (Resumé) for the FFA Internship Application

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Writing job applications is often a time-consuming and exhausting experience, even in your own language. When applying for a job/position or internship one normally sends a covering letter (cover letter in the U.S.A.) and a curriculum vitae (CV) (also resume in U.S.A.).

There is no single correct way of writing a job application in English. A number of acceptable styles exist, any on many points the experts disagree. A good application is simply one that gets you an interview, the position sought or acceptance as an intern.

Your application is your marketing tool. Put yourself in the position of the recruiter (who here may be a lawyer or judge, for example), who may have to read many applications. Most will receive no more than one minute of attention. Your first aim is to keep the recruiter's attention for a couple of minutes and to make sure that your application is not instantly rejected.

To do this, it must meet THREE criteria: It must be clear, relevant and special.

If your application is poorly presented and difficult to read, no recruiter is going to waste his or her time on it. Thus, PROOFREAD your documents before sending them to the lawyer, judge, etc. They also want to see relevant qualifications and experience, and to know what special qualities you have to offer. Thus, include all possible relevant skills and stress how motivated and able you are to be a good intern to them.

Again, presentation is very important. Use good-quality paper. Draft your cover letter and CV in a clear and easy manner to read. Nicely organized!

A recent practice is the online application. Some firms allow you to send your application by e-mail. Make sure you send it in a format that can be read by the recruiter. The cover letter and CV should be attached SEPARATELY (two separate documents) in your email. Note also that many firms will not accept attachments for fear of receiving viruses. When not specifically requested, mailing your application per post is the best and more professional way.

The following are some ideas/suggestions about what to write regarding “WHY THEM”, meaning why you are applying to this particular firm, lawyer, etc.:

- As a student with a strong international perspective, I would appreciate very much being considered for an unpaid internship with your firm.
- My interest in your firm is based on the substantial correlation between your practice and my professional goals. (Here you should include any relevant legal organizations/extracurricular activities which have to do with your professional goals/interests as well as any courses taken or currently taking which deal with areas of law the firm practices in.)

The following are suggestions/ideas about what to write regarding WHY YOU are qualified, WHAT you can do for them:

- I have the academic ability and organizational skills necessary to produce quality work within time limits.
- As a student, I combine full-time study, part-time work and a variety of extracurricular activities while still achieving outstanding (or very good) academic results.
- I am a very motivated and hard-working student, and through my educational and past work experiences I have gained very good interpersonal, organizational, and time-management skills.
- I have a sound knowledge of the fundamental principles of both civil and common law, and can work well independently as well as with others. I could assist you with general administrative tasks, conduct legal research, draft legal documents, and do translation work as well.
- I am willing and able to assist you in whichever manner you may deem appropriate.
- I am confident that I could be a good intern to you (your office) and therefore hope that you will consider my application favorably.

THINGS TO KEEP IN MIND - LETTER WRITING

- THINK about your reader (are you applying to a lawyer, judge, etc.)
- Keep it SIMPLE and SHORT
- Each paragraph should contain ONE idea/subject
- Letter should be one to two pages long
- Do NOT begin all sentences with “I”
- Do NOT use contractions (I’d, didn’t, it’s)
- Paragraphs are separated by a space (blank line)
- CAPITAL LETTER AT START OF LETTER
- FIRST PARAGRAPH of letter is about “Why I am writing to you”
- SECOND PARAGRAPH of letter is a brief description of the FFA Program, explaining why the need of an unpaid three-week internship
- THIRD and FOURTH PARAGRAPHS of the letter is about “Why I have chosen you” and “Why I am qualified/what I can do for you”
- FINAL PARAGRAPH of the letter is the conclusion where student lets reader know what his/her email address is especially if they have any questions or require any references. Conclude by thanking reader for his/her consideration of your application and letting them know that you look forward to hearing from them soon.
- READ YOUR LETTER CAREFULLY BEFORE MAILING: GRAMMAR, SPELLING OR PUNCTUATION MISTAKES ARE OUT OF THE QUESTION!
- Use good white quality paper for your cover letter which should be the same as the one for your CV
- ALWAYS DATE and SIGN YOUR LETTERS

THINGS TO LOOK OUT FOR:

AMERICAN

- March 26, 2002
- punc. after opening and closing greetings

Example:

Dear Mr. Brown,

Dear Mr. Brown:

Sincerely,

Yours Sincerely,

BRITISH

26 March 2002
no punc. after opening and closing greetings

Dear Mr Brown

Sincerely

Yours sincerely

- Never write the date 3/5/02. This is confusing because in British English this means 3 May; in American English it means March 5th.
- “Thank you” (formal) and “Thanks” (informal)
- “Yours sincerely” is more formal than “Best wishes” or “Best regards”
- “I look forward to” is more formal than “I am looking forward to”

DO NOT FORGET HOWEVER, THAT IN BOTH OF THESE LAST TWO CASES, IF A VERB FOLLOWS, IT MUST BE IN THE “-ing” FORM.

Example:

- I look forward to seeing you soon.
- I look forward to hearing from you soon.
- I am looking forward to hearing from you soon.

Not Putting the “-ing” on the verb is a very common mistake made by German-speakers. Another common mistake is forgetting the “it” in “I would appreciate it if you could . . .

- Use the neutral title “Ms.” when writing to a woman unless she herself has used either of the more traditional forms: “Mrs.” for a married woman or “Miss” for an unmarried woman.
- Titles such as Mrs, Ms, Dr, and Mr are usually written without full stops (periods) in British English and with full stops (periods) in American English.

STARTING A LETTER

I am writing to express my interest in obtaining an unpaid internship with your law office (or name of the firm). **See sample cover letter.**

ENCLOSURES

Please find enclosed/attached a copy of . . .

Enclosed please find my curriculum vitae resume for your review and consideration.

CONCLUDING A LETTER

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at (write email address).

Thank you in advance for your assistance.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

RESUMÉ/CURRICULUM VITAE

One of the biggest differences between resumes in the English- and German-speaking worlds is that applications in English tend to contain less personal information. For example, it is not usual (sometimes prohibited) to include a photograph. One reason for this, particularly in the U.S.A., is to avoid the possibility of discrimination on the basis of appearance or race. For the same reason details of your marital status and religion/political affiliation is omitted, as can information about your parents, their religion, etc. Age, nationality and having a driver's license are also details that can be left out, though if you think this information will help you, you should certainly include it. This may be appropriate if you are applying to a listed position requiring this information.

There are two basic types of CVs: a chronological CV and a functional CV. Of the two types, the chronological CV is more common and, in most cases, more appropriate.

Traditionally, the chronological CV listed the history of your education and work experience in the order in which it occurred. A variation now considered preferable by most people, is the "reverse chronological" CV. This starts with your current job and works backwards. The advantage is that your most recent and probably most relevant experience is at the beginning, where it is more likely to catch the reader's attention.

It is usually better to put your work experience before your education, unless you have little work experience. However, since you are law students applying for an intern, start with education first.

A functional CV, in contrast, categorizes your experience according to the type of work you have done. This can be useful for people who have changed directions a number of times in their careers. For example, you might arrange your work experience under the headings "marketing", "sales" and "management". (This is not applicable or relevant now as you are law students applying for an FFA internship.)

When describing duties: use "power" or "action" words. **SEE documents containing action verbs.** Use the past forms of verbs without "I", as in "Increased sales by 20%", "Supervised, managed, directed," etc.

Another important issue is the translation of German qualifications and institutions. The best advice is to use the original German terms and give their nearest equivalent in brackets, for example: "Abitur (equivalent of A levels in Britain, high school in U.S.A.) Don't assume that recruiters will be familiar with the marking system in Germany. If you got the top grade, say so.

THINGS TO KEEP IN MIND - RESUME/CV

- **HEADING:** Name, address, telephone number, email address (**ALL CENTERED AT THE TOP**)
- Use “**REVERSE CHRONOLOGICAL**” format
- Start with **EDUCATION**
- **UNIVERSITY:** Name, city, country
- **FACULTY OF LAW**
- **FFA Program** (with brief description) and then , **LIST ALL** courses you have already taken and are currently taking (**SEE Sample CV**)
- **HIGH SCHOOL:** Format is **SAME AS ABOVE**
- **WORK EXPERIENCE** (most recent first)
- **NAME OF EMPLOYER** (in original language), city, country
- State your **POSITION**
- Brief description of **DUTIES** (use action words, short sentences, **DO NOT** write “I”
- **SKILLS** (list them, do not write sentences!)
- **LANGUAGES** (Native German speaker, proficient in, basic, intermediate, good knowledge of, fluent in)
- **TYPING** (must include w.p.m.)
- **COMPUTER** (list all programs)
- **ACTIVITIES/INTERESTS**
- **LIST** hobbies, sports, volunteer work, membership in university organizations, travel, any other work experiences that could not be placed above