

**Section IV: Cover Letters and Other  
Application Materials**

## Section IV: Cover Letters and Other Application Materials

A well-written cover letter encourages the prospective employer to look at your résumé and bring you in for an interview. You should personalize and target your letter to a particular employer and convey your enthusiasm for the employer and position. A cover letter should state your employment objective. It can also convey information that did not fit on your résumé or was not necessarily appropriate for a résumé. The goal of the cover letter is to tell the employer why they should hire you.

### Getting Started

As with your résumé, a cover letter should be professional in tone, short, concise, and error-free. Remember, you are selling yourself to the employer in your letter and not merely expressing your interest in working for them.

There is no “best” way to write a cover letter, though set forth below are overviews of the paragraphs in a three-paragraph cover letter. If you find it difficult to start writing, one suggestion is to ignore all conventions of business writing and format—simply write out what you wish you could say. Getting your thoughts on paper is the first step; once your thoughts have been written, you can rephrase them so that they are organized and appropriate for a cover letter.

### Cover Letter Presentation

A cover letter is a professional business letter. The paper should be the same quality as your résumé. Similar to your résumé, you should use a simple font such as Times New Roman, Arial, or Century Schoolbook (use the same font as on your résumé). Font size should range from 11–12 point, and the overall letter should not exceed one page.

### Cover Letter Format: The Basics

#### Heading

The cover letter should include a heading at the top of the page. The heading should include the date and your return address. It should also include the contact name, title, and address of the employer. Because you will attach a résumé to the cover letter, it may make sense to use the same heading on the cover letter as on the résumé.

#### Address

At risk of stating the obvious, you need to address the letter to an individual. Identify the actual person to whom the letter should be sent (either through a job posting, the office’s website, or even by calling the office and asking). The person’s name, title (if available), organization, and mailing address should be listed under the date, but before the salutation. (*See chapter Sample Cover Letters in this guide.*)

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**Remember:** Always address the cover letter to a specific person rather than “Hiring Partner.” Call to identify the appropriate person or to verify that you have the correct information.

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In addition to the hiring partner, recruiting coordinator, etc., consider sending your résumé to a John Marshall alumnus at the office, or the head of your desired specialty area.

### Cover Letter Format: The Body

The body of a cover letter can be three to four paragraphs. However, good cover letter writing demands that regardless of length, the letter should be individualized and specific to the employer. We cannot stress enough that a generic form cover letter will fail to distinguish you and your résumé from other applicants.

#### Paragraph One: “This Is Who I Am”

Paragraph One needs to catch the reader’s attention. It introduces you, your interest in the employer, and how you came to send this employer your résumé.

*Example:*

- I am a first-year law student at The John Marshall Law School and am writing to express my interest in working at Smith & Jones LLC as a summer law clerk.

It is not proper to have a one-sentence paragraph. Accordingly, use the second sentence to specify why you are writing to this employer. The single best way to do this is to have a reference or specific reason for contacting the employer.

*Examples:*

- Professor Marshall suggested I contact you regarding opportunities with your firm.
- I am following up with our conversation from the CBA Labor Law Committee meeting regarding a possible clerkship with your firm.

If you do not have a personal connection, emphasize your professional or academic credentials as they may relate to the particular position. You can even stress your commitment to the office’s legal community:

*Examples:*

- I am responding to your advertisement for a law clerk. As a first-year law student with two years of paralegal litigation experience, I believe I would be able to immediately assist your firm’s litigation group.
- I am writing to you because your work with the environment interests me tremendously.
- As a lifelong Chicago resident, I am very excited about beginning my legal career in the community.

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**Note:** This is a short paragraph and you do not need to go into great detail. Your goals are to entice the reader to continue reading and to sell yourself.

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Be sure to type the employer's name exactly as the firm uses it. Common mistakes include omitting commas or adding extra commas. Additionally, the first time you mention the employer, use the full name (*e.g.*, Tarkenton Foreman & White LLP). Thereafter, you may use a shorter version of the name; most law firms have commonly used shortened versions of their name, which can be found by looking at how they refer to themselves on their own website (*e.g.*, Tarkenton Foreman).

### Paragraph Two: "This Is What I Like About You"

Paragraph Two is your opportunity to demonstrate your knowledge of and interest in the employer. Since in many ways your cover letter is a writing sample, here you have a chance to show your research skills.

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*Note: Recognize that for some employers, particularly small firms and sole practitioners, you simply will not be able to find enough information to write a solid Paragraph Two. Rather than include a generic paragraph, you may want to add a simple sentence or two at the end of Paragraph One stating your interest in the employer and otherwise skip Paragraph Two. Why is it that you are writing to this particular employer? Other than the fact that they offer an opportunity for paid employment, why have you sought them out?*

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Take the time to learn about the employer so that you can tell them what it is that makes you want to work for them. Begin by providing a solid introductory sentence and then highlight the specifics that have attracted you to this employer:

*Examples:*

- My interest in labor law greatly aligns with Smith & Jones's history of union representation.
- I am particularly excited about Kramer Young's summer associate program, through which I would be exposed to several areas of law during the course of the summer.

The key is to highlight those aspects of the employer that resonate with you, and express your interest in such aspects while also (if possible) giving a plug for your own skills.

This paragraph need not be more than three or four sentences. But it should be specifically tailored for each employer—if this paragraph looks exactly the same for a large law firm as it does for a government agency, then you probably have not made enough of an effort at making it employer-specific.

### Paragraph Three: "This Is What I Can Do for You"

As indicated by the heading, Paragraph Three needs to answer the employer's question, "What can you do for me?" In Paragraph Two, you addressed why you want to work for the employer; now the employer needs to know why they should hire you.

#### Step One: Identify Your Strengths

Determine certain skills and attributes that you would like to stress to the employer. One way to do this is to look for themes within your résumé. Reread it several times and, rather than looking at what you did in any particular job, look to see what skills you acquired through all of your jobs and other experiences. For example, if you performed economics research as an undergraduate, worked as an insurance investigator, and most recently conducted legal research as a summer law clerk, it would make sense to stress your research skills.

#### Step Two: Focus on the Employer's Interests

Look at the job posting or research the employer to determine what your responsibilities might be. Decide which of your strengths identified above best align with what the employer is seeking.

#### Step Three: Begin Writing

Apply your information and knowledge from Steps One and Two and write an argument on behalf of your number one client—you. Begin with a strong introductory sentence and then present "arguments" about your various skills and attributes and how they fit the job description.

Focus on one to three accomplishments or skills that would be of particular interest to the employer. Do not simply repeat what is on the résumé, but expand on the skills or talents mentioned. Further, synthesize across the résumé, supporting assertions about your skills with evidence from all areas on your résumé. Doing so will have a much greater impact than moving from résumé item to résumé item and describing what skills relate to each.

This is also a good place to incorporate information that did not fit on your résumé but may still be applicable. Avoid conclusory statements (*e.g.*, "I am a hard worker.") unless you are able to provide supporting evidence. State the facts and let the employers draw their own conclusions.

This should be the longest paragraph in the cover letter, but should not exceed five or six sentences.

*Examples:*

- Having spent several of my summers assisting my mother in her medical practice, I developed a substantive understanding of medical issues. This understanding grew into a desire to be a summer law clerk for a small medical malpractice law firm.
- My academic achievements demonstrate that I am motivated and can produce quality work. My GPA places me in the top 20 percent of my class.
- I have developed strong public speaking skills, not only through my participation in Moot Court, but also during college, working part-time in the admissions office, and conducting tours for prospective students.
- I am comfortable supervising others. As manager of the Student Activities Office at Loyola University, I delegated numerous projects and tasks to 10 student employees. My supervising skills were further strengthened while working as a branch manager for LaSalle Bank.
- I am continuously developing my writing skills. Many of these skills were honed while writing for my college newspaper and further strengthened as a member of THE JOHN MARSHALL LAW REVIEW.
- I have always taken pride in my strong organizational skills. Even as a summer camp counselor, I volunteered to plan staff outings, including five evening and two weekend excursions.

**Paragraph Four: “This Is How I Will Proceed”**

Paragraph Four is the easiest to write. Acknowledge the inclusion of a résumé, thank the employer for his/her consideration, indicate an availability to meet at the employer’s convenience, and if the organization is out of town, let the employer know when you will be in the area. End on an upbeat note.

*Examples:*

- I welcome the opportunity to discuss my qualifications with you and your firm’s needs.
- Thank you for taking the time to review my résumé. I look forward to hearing from you soon.

It is okay to be aggressive in seeking to establish an interview, as long as you are polite.

*Example:*

- I will be in [city] on [date] and would be happy to call and arrange for a convenient meeting time.

**Cover Letter Dos and Don’ts**

- Sending out mass mailings to every employer in a city is often a tempting (and very ineffective) option for students. Bear in mind that a very low response rate is common for mass mailings.
- A better approach, if you are sending out numerous cover letters without a personal contact, is to send targeted mailings. Identify firms by their practice areas, size of firm, geographic location, reputation for hiring John Marshall alumni, or any other factor, and structure your cover letter to reflect strengths the employer will appreciate.
- Keep track of all employers to whom you have sent résumés and letters. Include names, dates, etc. Keep the list by your phone, so that if you receive a phone call from a person whose name you do not recognize, you can scan the list and refresh your memory. Knowing the date that the letters were sent will help you in following up in a timely fashion.
- Follow up on all correspondence, unless the employer specifically states “no phone calls.”
- Employers want to see that you have done your research. When an employer receives hundreds of unsolicited résumés, a form cover letter is easy to spot. Be original with your words.
- When including a résumé and other documents, be sure to include the word “Enclosure” or “Enclosures” (as appropriate) under the signature line at the bottom of the page, so that the reader knows to look for additional pages.
- Cover letters can be mailed, emailed, or hand delivered. If emailing, you can put something like the following in the body of your email:

Subject line: Application for [your name]  
Dear Ms./Mr. \_\_\_\_\_ [if there is no specific contact, write Dear Sir or Madam]:  
Attached please find my [cover letter and résumé] in application for the [position title] with [full name of employer]. If you have questions or require any additional information, please do not hesitate to contact me.  
Thank you for your consideration.  
Sincerely,  
[your full name]

If a particular format is not specified, we recommend attaching documents in PDF format.

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*Remember: You are more likely to stand out if you personalize your cover letters.*

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## Sample Cover Letters

*A Note of Caution:* You are being supplied with several samples. DO NOT COPY sections of these letters verbatim. If you parrot any of these phrases word for word you are doing yourself a disservice. John Marshall students often send résumés and cover letters to the same employers. If a given employer receives two or more cover letters that use the same wording, he or she will know you copied the language or idea. This has happened in the past and it is embarrassing for both the student and the law school when employers call the Career Services Office to complain.

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### Sample Cover Letter Format

Your Name (12–16 pt. size)

Address (10–12 pt. size)

Phone Number

Email

Current Date

Individual's Name

Title

Firm Name

Address

City, State, Zip Code

Dear Mr./Ms. \_\_\_\_\_:

State purpose of letter; who you are (*e.g.*, a second-year law student at The John Marshall Law School) and name of job for which you are applying. If someone has recommended you, mention the person's name. Tell how you learned of the position if appropriate. Refer to any ties you have to the employer or the city where the employer is located.

Give details explaining why you are interested in the job and/or the employer. Reasons could include type of employer (*e.g.*, interest in public service organization), mix of practice areas, geographic location, and specialization in a practice area. This needs to be genuine, not contrived or "boilerplate."

Tell the employer why you should be considered for the position and list a few qualifications you feel are most likely to catch the attention of the reader. Either highlight main points from your resume or mention additional items not included in your resume (*e.g.*, courses taken pertinent to the job). Items such as high grades, honors, strong work ethic, leadership skills, prior career, legal experience, and research/writing/analysis skills may all be relevant depending on the position.

Request an interview and state when you will be available. Provide a phone number where the employer may contact you and thank the employer for his/her consideration of your resume.

Sincerely,

(Signature)

Typed Name

Enclosure(s)

## Ashley Briand

3245 North Broadway Street, Apt. 2 · Chicago, IL 60657 · (773) 552-4262 · B.Ashley@gmail.com

August 20, 2015

Ms. Kathleen Hogan Morrison  
70 West Madison Street, Suite 2100  
Chicago, IL 60602

Dear Ms. Morrison:

I am a first-year student at The John Marshall Law School. I am very interested in family law and am submitting this application for the law clerk position at your firm. I am also interested in speaking with you because I would like to learn more about your involvement with adoption law. Your achievement of being a 2014 “Angel in Adoption” is very impressive, and I hope to hear more about the work you have done to earn this award.

I entered law school with the intention of becoming a family law attorney, and I am looking forward to working in a law office setting. I have experience in clerical work, answering phones, and typing documents. I pride myself on my work ethic and have a strong academic record. Additionally, I am familiar with the juvenile court system through my volunteer position with Court Appointed Special Advocates. I believe that my work and volunteer experience, as well as my ability to adapt and learn new skills, make me an excellent candidate for the law clerk position with your firm.

I have included my resume for your review. I would appreciate an opportunity to meet with you to discuss the possibility of employment. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Ashley Briand

Enclosures

## Sarah Cromwell

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2500 W. Rogers Road  
Naperville, Illinois 60204  
708.373.2854 · scromwell@gmail.com

September 1, 2015

David Ellis  
First Assistant State's Attorney  
Richard J. Daley Center  
50 W. Washington Street, Room 500  
Chicago, Illinois 60602

Dear Mr. Ellis:

I am writing because I am interested in obtaining a position as a law clerk at the Cook County State's Attorney's Office. Matthew Mandel suggested that I contact you about my interest in criminal law. He encouraged me to work for the State's Attorney's Office and believed it would provide me with the best practical experience for continuing my career goals.

Since high school, I have focused my efforts toward a career in criminal prosecution. During my undergraduate studies, I took the initial step by interning with the Cass County State's Attorney's Office in Fargo, North Dakota. I worked in connection with their domestic violence cases and helped facilitate their federal grant in that area.

Currently, I am completing my second year at The John Marshall Law School. My coursework, including Criminal Law, Evidence, and Trial Advocacy has strengthened my interest in criminal prosecution. After discussing my career plans with Matthew Mandel, I believe a clerkship with the Cook County State's Attorney's Office would not only bolster my career, but benefit your office.

I look forward to discussing how I can contribute to your office. Although I will be taking classes this summer, including Criminal Procedure, I have structured my schedule to be available every day. Perhaps we could meet briefly sometime during the next two weeks to discuss your office's needs and how I can help.

Sincerely,

Sarah Cromwell

## ELIZABETH DESMOND

1234 Wethersfield Road, Hartford, CT 06109  
860.760.5140 • elizabethdesmond@gmail.com

April 10, 2015

Alexandra Lincoln  
Lincoln-Herndon LLP  
1 North 6th Street  
Springfield, IL 62701

Dear Ms. Lincoln:

As a third year law student, I am eager to begin my career in family law. My work experience, academic credentials and strong work ethic make me well qualified for a position at your firm. I currently rank in the top 27% of my class, am a member of THE JOHN MARSHALL LAW REVIEW, competed in the Domenick L. Gabrielli National Family Law Moot Court Competition and have repeatedly been named to the Dean's List.

In addition to my academic achievements, I have nearly two years of experience working in a family law firm. I am proficient in drafting various family law pleadings, drafting and responding to discovery requests, and preparing marital settlement agreements and joint parenting agreements. I am comfortable communicating with clients and opposing counsel regarding case progression and discovery matters. I have also attended numerous court proceedings and entered court orders.

Moreover, I have been a Research Assistant for two professors at The John Marshall Law School, one of whom specializes in family law. Through those positions, I have honed my legal research skills in a wide variety of practice areas, including medical malpractice, evidence, negligence, family law and images of the law in media.

My background has prepared me to make significant contributions to Lincoln-Herndon. I would appreciate the opportunity for an interview to learn more about your practice and discuss how my qualifications would meet the needs of your firm and its clients.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth Desmond

Enclosure



## Michael Haley

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252 N. Wabash Avenue, Unit 2  
Chicago, Illinois 60604  
312.272.3975 • mhaley@gmail.com

May 1, 2015

Ms. Tania Madison  
Colomna & Orlando, LLP  
1560 W. Madison Street, Suite 1200  
Chicago, Illinois 60611

Dear Ms. Madison:

Dan Wilson referred me to you regarding summer employment. I am completing my first year at The John Marshall Law School and am interested in working as a law clerk for your firm this summer. I am considering a career in litigation and look forward to assisting the attorneys at Colomna & Orlando with serving the needs of your clients. I believe that my experience and training will allow me to quickly learn what is expected of a law clerk at your firm and I look forward to gaining additional knowledge and experience in personal injury law.

Before attending law school, I had the opportunity to work in a personal injury law firm. Through this experience, law school, and growing up around a family of lawyers, I gained valuable insight into personal injury law. As a first-year law student, I have taken Torts and will be completing Civil Procedure before this summer. Furthermore, school, work, and four years of college basketball have taught me to work hard, stay disciplined, and be a team player.

I would enjoy meeting with you or others in your office to discuss a summer position. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Michael Haley

Enclosure

## Stephen Kellogg

3000 Westchester Street #3 • Chicago, Illinois 60612 • (773) 226-6134 • skellogg@law.jmls.edu

March 17, 2015

Mr. Philip Ackerman  
Johnston Greene LLC  
542 S. Dearborn Street  
Suite 1100  
Chicago, Illinois 60605

Dear Mr. Ackerman:

I am interested in obtaining a summer clerk position with Johnston Greene LLC. My experiences as a law student and judicial extern have fostered a strong interest in practicing civil litigation. This position offers an invaluable opportunity to directly impact the litigation process by performing research, drafting memoranda, and any other tasks necessary to put on the best case for the client. I am especially eager to learn more about the practice of law as it pertains to governmental representation, as well as to representing the interests of small and mid-sized businesses.

I believe that my unique academic and professional background make me an attractive candidate for this position. Prior to becoming a full-time law student, I worked in sales and logistics for six years. My experiences at ABC Worldwide, an exceptionally frenetic and high-energy office, instilled in me the importance of handling myself and my responsibilities in a competent, efficient, and professional manner. Those qualities have served me well as a law student, as demonstrated by my various academic honors and scholarships. In addition to my academic work, externing this semester in the chambers of Judge Nolan Ryan in the Federal District Court for the Northern District of Indiana allowed me to develop my legal writing and researching skills while working on assignments more attuned to the everyday practice of law. Given my track record, I am confident that I am someone that Johnston Greene would be proud to have on its team as a summer clerk.

I am available to begin as early as June 1. Thank you for taking the time to review my credentials. I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Sincerely,

Stephen Kellogg

Enclosures

## Justin Gregor

2245 Pointer Road • Grayslake, IL 60030 • (847) 628-4783 • [jgregor@law.jmls.edu](mailto:jgregor@law.jmls.edu)

September 17, 2015

Ms. Lisa Taylor  
Mason Dixon LLP  
Three First National Plaza  
60 West Madison Street, Suite 3000  
Chicago, IL 60602

Dear Ms. Taylor:

I am a second-year student at The John Marshall Law School and am sincerely interested in working as a summer associate at Mason Dixon LLP. I attended a cocktail social at your firm's Riverside Plaza office earlier this spring and was extremely impressed. All of the attorneys I met there were both professional and cordial. Through this networking event I was able to make acquaintance with Ms. Samantha Summers in your Labor & Employment department. Ms. Summers provided me with plenty of useful information on specializing in employee benefits law. Due to my previous experience managing a unionized workforce, I am extremely interested in labor and employment law. While working on my master's degree in human resource management, my interest in employee benefits law was piqued. I would love to put my previous experience to good use at Mason Dixon LLP.

I currently rank in the top 5% of my class, am a member of THE JOHN MARSHALL LAW REVIEW, and have repeatedly been named to the Dean's List. I am a compelling writer and consistently rank at the top of my Lawyering Skills classes at John Marshall, which has a highly-ranked legal writing program.

I have experience managing employees and very detailed projects through my previous position as an Electrician Foreman for Silver Lining Electric Association, which will serve me well as I take on multiple legal assignments simultaneously. I have also obtained extensive leadership experience, in dynamic situations, through my military service. This experience has taught me to take charge of an assignment even when the situation is fluid, and will aid me in being both adaptive and innovative when working in an unpredictable legal environment. I currently have over 12 years of service in the U.S. Air Force. Due to my strong work ethic I have obtained the rank of Technical Sergeant, and have supervised hundreds of airmen during my military career. I will continue to demonstrate this ethic as an associate in order to efficiently produce high quality research and writing assignments.

I look forward to discussing how my knowledge, skills, and abilities can contribute to your firm. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Justin Gregor

## Harris Lamont

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900 W. Bellaire · Chicago, IL 66061 · 847.525.3574 · HarrisLamont@gmail.com

June 10, 2015

Mr. Timothy Pippen  
Woods Filmore & Doomer  
50 West Monroe Street, Suite 3700  
Chicago, IL 60603

Dear Mr. Pippen:

I am interested in the law clerk position at Woods Filmore & Doomer. In particular, this position appeals to me because of my human biology degree, my understanding of human anatomy and biological processes, and my past professional work experience.

Prior to attending law school I worked in research equipment sales for three years. At Balmoral Corp. of America, I was able to use my human biology degree to understand researchers' work and needs and then provide to them solutions to their problems. I used my persuasive skills to expand the company's customer and business potential. My experiences at Balmoral instilled in me the importance of handling myself in a professional manner. These qualities, as well as my desire to learn and work hard, allowed me to further my success at Mantell Corp. where I achieved several months as a top sales performer in the company before leaving to attend law school.

While in law school, I have used the skills and maturity that I gained from my professional work experience to achieve academic success. I was one of only thirty first-year law students accepted into The John Marshall IP Honors Legal Writing Course and one of just fourteen who completed both semesters of the course. The program has given me the knowledge and tools that allow me to excel past other second and third year students in legal research and writing.

Thank you for taking the time to review my credentials. I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Sincerely,

Harris Lamont

Enclosure

## **Katherine Mason**

425 Ritchy Road, Orland Park, IL 60513  
847.275.0440 | kmason@gmail.com

August 15, 2015

Deborah White  
Chief, Felony Trial Division  
Office of the Cook County Public Defender  
2650 S. California Avenue  
Chicago, IL 60608

Dear Ms. White:

I am a second-year student at The John Marshall Law School and am seeking an internship with the Felony Trial Division of the Office of the Cook County Public Defender. I am following up on our telephone conversation earlier this summer regarding an available internship with your office. I have also communicated with Michelle Rosa and Luca Bensen concerning internship possibilities.

I have been following the work of your office closely. Throughout my undergraduate studies, I took numerous criminal justice courses, which helped me gain an understanding of the criminal justice system and develop a sense of what is required of a public defender. Along with coursework, I have been working with less fortunate individuals for many years. In high school, I worked with women in transitional housing. I tutored children and fundraised for various organizations throughout high school, college, and law school.

During my two years of experience as a clerk for Daniel E. Summers, Attorney at Law, I have strengthened my research, writing, and communication skills. I have researched Illinois evidence law for a workers' compensation case and prepared various motions. I have also had numerous opportunities to interact with clients over the phone and in person. These clients are mostly injured workers who are highly stressed or in a lot of pain. I believe that this experience will help me be more aware and able to help those clients whom your office is defending.

I would appreciate the opportunity to meet with you and discuss the possibility of an internship with your office. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Katherine Mason

Enclosures

## **Amanda Mattel**

2002 N. Jackson Road, Arlington Heights, IL 60004  
(847) 875-6358 | amattel@law.jmls.edu

August 9, 2015

Melanie Wise  
Donnelly Law Group Ltd.  
222 N. LaSalle Street, Suite 1100  
Chicago, IL 60601

Dear Ms. Wise:

I am a second-year student at The John Marshall Law School and I am interested in working as a law clerk for Donnelly Law Group Ltd. I entered law school with the intention of becoming a personal injury lawyer and am particularly interested in the opportunity to assist attorneys with depositions and trials. I believe this internship would provide a framework where I can not only contribute through my academic and professional strengths, but also gain greater insight into working in a boutique-sized personal injury law firm.

My strong work ethic, writing ability, research experience, and leadership skills make me an excellent candidate to work at your firm. I am a compelling writer and consistently perform well in my Lawyering Skills classes at John Marshall, which has a highly-ranked legal writing program. Furthermore, I have held leadership positions in various student organizations, including serving as a student tutor for the Latin American Recruitment and Educational Services Program.

I worked at the Cook County State's Attorney's Office and Kelly Law as a law clerk this past summer. I performed several different functions ranging from conducting legal research to drafting motions and briefs. As a law clerk with the State's Attorney's Office, I gained valuable courtroom exposure by helping attorneys draft court orders. As a law clerk with Kelly Law, I gained insight into personal injury law by drafting medical chronologies and deposition abstracts. In addition to my academic work, my work experience this summer allowed me to develop my legal writing and research skills while working on assignments more attuned to the everyday practice of law. I am confident these skills will aid me in taking on assignments and cases as a law clerk at your firm.

I would be pleased to speak with you further about the position and my qualifications. My resume is enclosed for your review. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Amanda Mattel

Enclosure

## MICHELLE PETERS

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848 Oak Street • Park Ridge, IL 60068 • 847.624.1097 • mpeters@law.jmls.edu

October 11, 2015

Mr. Michael Baggot  
Hiring Attorney  
Ripes Nelson Baggot & Kalobratsos PC  
205 W. Randolph Street  
19th Floor  
Chicago, IL 60606

Dear Mr. Baggot:

I am writing in response to the law clerk position that you posted with The John Marshall Law School. I am searching for a law clerk position with a small firm where I can gain as much practical litigation experience as possible while utilizing my analytical and advocacy skills. In particular, your firm appeals to me because I am keenly interested in practicing employment law.

My strong work ethic, writing abilities, research experience, and leadership skills make me an excellent candidate to work at your firm. I am a compelling writer and consistently perform well in my Lawyering Skills classes at John Marshall, which has a highly-ranked legal writing program. I continue to strengthen my research and writing skills as a member of THE JOHN MARSHALL LAW REVIEW, as a research assistant for a professor, and as a judicial extern at the Illinois Appellate Court. Furthermore, I have held leadership positions in various student organizations, including serving as the president of the Women's Law Caucus.

Additionally, my interest in and exposure to employment law issues will serve me well at Ripes Nelson Baggot & Kalobratsos PC. I took a Disability Law course which introduced me to a variety of employment and workers' compensation matters. I developed a passion for employment law and am seeking the opportunity to use my skills and knowledge in this area of law. I am confident these skills will aid me in taking on assignments and cases as a law clerk at your firm.

I would appreciate the opportunity to meet with you in person to learn about your firm's needs. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Michelle Peters

Enclosure

**BOBBY SHAPIRO**  
2220 North Campbell Avenue  
Chicago, IL 60647  
(773) 508-4783  
bobbyshapiro@gmail.com

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September 6, 2015

Lenny Klein  
Havin Schulman LLC  
100 North Wacker Drive  
Suite 300  
Chicago, IL 60606

Dear Mr. Klein:

I am a first-year law student at The John Marshall Law School and am writing regarding the law clerk position available with Havin Schulman LLC. I am interested in your firm because of the variety of areas in which you practice. I was also impressed by your firm's long history of achieving favorable results for its clients and believe that it would be an excellent place to get further legal training.

My extensive experience in personal injury and consumer bankruptcy law will enable me to immediately assist your attorneys as they continue to serve your clients successfully. As a clerk at Smith & Smith, I drafted petitions, rebuttals, and disclaimers on a daily basis. I also conducted extensive research on case law related to personal injury and federal bankruptcy statutes. However, I believe the most valuable skills I learned in this position were how to work on a team and interact with clients.

My academic record and strength as a writer make me an attractive candidate for this position. I work tirelessly as a student as reflected by my top 7% class rank after my first semester at John Marshall. I have a solid foundation on which to build my legal career and I am confident I would make an immediate and worthwhile contribution to your team.

I have enclosed my resume for your review and would appreciate the opportunity to meet with you to discuss the possibility of employment with your office. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Bobby Shapiro

Enclosure



## ELLIS SMUGG

1212 Westfield Road, New Haven, CT 06640  
847.766.5450 • ellismugg@gmail.com

August 20, 2015

Melissa Mann  
City of Hartford  
Law Department  
550 Main Street  
Hartford, CT 06103

Dear Ms. Mann:

I am native Connecticutian and a 3L at The John Marshall Law School in Chicago, Illinois. I grew up in Hartford, attended Trinity College and I intend to take the Connecticut bar exam and move back to Connecticut after graduation. I learned of assistant corporation counsel position through my search of public sector career opportunities with the City of Hartford. My background and experience make me a good fit for this position.

Since my first year of law school, my focus has always been on working in the public sector. As a law clerk at the Cook County Public Guardian's Office and the Law Office of the Cook County Public Defender, I strengthened my legal research and writing skills by drafting petitions and motions daily. I took several drafting courses at my law school, which has the second best writing program in the nation. Additionally, I was invited to join one of John Marshall's honor journals, and my article is to be published in the next issue. I would like to bring my strong background in writing and research to the City of Hartford in order to represent my hometown and where I plan to settle down.

Working in the largest public defender system in the country, I learned quickly how to handle large caseloads. Being organized and efficient was mandatory in order to remember each case distinctly from the others and prioritize my responsibilities. I assisted my supervisor in preparing for several trials, and he often took my suggestions on how to introduce evidence beneficial to our cases. He also used the arguments and reasoning I developed for him during motions and closing arguments. Additionally, I obtained a temporary student license that allowed me to argue motions, participate in bond hearings, and enter pleas before a judge. I know I would be beneficial to the City of Hartford, having already been exposed to a demanding workload and having extensive experience in writing and research.

I would appreciate an opportunity to interview for the assistant corporation counsel position, and I believe given my experience, interests and background that I would be an asset to your team. Thank you for your time and consideration. I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Sincerely,

Ellis Smugg

## Philip Trostrud

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140 Remus Lane, Park Ridge, Illinois 60068  
(847) 388-6495 • ptrostrud@jmls.edu

May 13, 2015

William Jones  
Nisen & Elliott, LLC  
200 W. Adams Street, Suite 2500  
Chicago, Illinois 60606

Dear Mr. Jones:

I am a 2L at The John Marshall Law School who is pursuing a JD/LLM in Intellectual Property Law, and I am passionate about my studies. I am writing because I am interested in obtaining a position as a law clerk at Nisen & Elliott. I learned of this position through our mutual friend, Sarah Theisen, who also works at Nisen. In particular, your firm interests me because I am keenly interested in practicing patent law.

All of my life, I have been captivated by the field of science. I graduated with a BS in Chemistry from the University of Illinois. While I pursued my degree I worked as a pharmacy technician. This position gave me the opportunity to observe firsthand the marvels of medical science in an operating room at Northwestern Memorial Hospital. Whether making cardioplegic solutions for a patient's heart during open-heart surgery or discussing medical implications with pharmacists and doctors, I have been highly intrigued with improving lives through scientific innovation. Prior to law school I was introduced to patents as an intern at Pierce and Jorgenson, Ltd., where I researched patent applications for marketing purposes. Concentrating on patent law will allow me to pursue my passions for science and intellectual property to help make medical advancements a reality.

As a result of my work with patents at Pierce and Jorgenson, Ltd., I decided to pursue a joint JD/LLM degree in intellectual property. The course load has not been easy, but I pride myself on my work ethic and strong academic record. My academic background in intellectual property law combined with my experience in the medical field makes me a strong candidate for a position with Nisen & Elliott.

I would appreciate an opportunity to meet with you to discuss the possibility of employment and how I can contribute to your firm. My resume is enclosed for your review. Thank you for taking the time to review my credentials.

Sincerely,

Philip Trostrud

Enclosures

## Camilla Vivek

350 S. Western Drive, Apt 15 • Chicago, IL 60616 • 847-734-6853 • camillavivek@gmail.com

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August 16, 2015

Ms. Danielle Gibbons  
Illinois Human Rights Commission  
100 W. Randolph Street, Suite 5-100  
Chicago, IL 60601

Dear Ms. Gibbons:

I am interested in participating in the Coles Fellowship Program this summer. I recently spoke with Karen Cooper about this opportunity, and she recommended that I send this cover letter to your attention. I am interested in this position because the mission of the Illinois Human Rights Commission resonates with my future goal of using my legal education to defend people's civil rights.

During college I took political science and sociology courses. I learned how the law affects people's everyday lives and has evolved to counteract discrimination. I decided to attend law school to gain the legal education necessary to help people understand their rights under the law and to protect them from discriminatory practices. At John Marshall, I had the opportunity to take Fair Housing Law, where I learned about the remedies available to people who have been discriminated against in attempting to find housing.

Last summer I worked for the Metropolitan Pier and Exposition Authority (MPEA) and gained valuable experience that helped me to further develop my legal research and analysis skills. As the only legal intern, I took on many responsibilities including researching and analyzing various legal issues ranging from trademark law to labor law issues. I also assisted the attorneys in interpreting the new legislation that now governs the activities of the MPEA and assisted in drafting new policies and procedures to coincide with the legal requirements.

I truly believe that my passion for public interest work and protecting people's civil rights along with my legal research, writing, and analytical skills make me an excellent candidate for this position. I sincerely appreciate your time and consideration and look forward to meeting you in person and discussing the fellowship in further detail.

Sincerely,

Camilla Vivek

Enclosure

**Michael Weeks**

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1226 Schiller Street, Apt. 3, Chicago, IL 60601  
312.374.3727 • mweeks@gmail.com

September 9, 2015

Mr. Gary Franks  
Hajek Arnold & Barney  
300 Career Avenue  
Baltimore, MD 23274

Dear Mr. Franks:

I am a first-year student at The John Marshall Law School and a 2013 graduate of the University of Maryland. I will be returning home at the conclusion of the school year and hope to obtain a summer position in the Baltimore area. Because I have not yet determined what type of law interests me, my objective is simply to acquire the best legal experience possible. Your current job posting for a law clerk indicates that you are seeking a law student to assist in different practice areas in your firm. I am very interested in this position and have submitted my resume and a writing sample for your review.

Prior to entering law school, I worked at Reynolds & Reynolds, where I performed several different tasks that ranged from drafting sales proposals to making marketing presentations to potential clients. I also developed strong research and writing skills at the University of Maryland by pursuing a demanding course of study in communications. I applied these skills while writing my senior thesis and graduated with a 3.8 GPA. I believe my experience in sales and marketing combined with my training in research and writing will be beneficial in a position as a law clerk with Hajek Arnold & Barney.

I look forward to meeting with you to discuss the possibility for summer employment. If you would like to arrange an appointment, I will be in the Baltimore area from December 22 through January 8. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Michael Weeks

Enclosures

## References

Create a separate reference sheet with the names, addresses, and phone numbers of 3–4 references. The reference sheet should have the same heading (name, address, phone number, and email) as your résumé and be on the same paper stock. Bring the reference sheet to your interviews, even if you previously submitted a copy.

Choose references that can speak to your ability to perform well in a legal job. Professors, former employers, and supervisors are good people to ask for references. If you are in your first year, undergraduate professors are acceptable references.

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*Remember: Personal references, such as family, friends, or relatives are not appropriate references. You should ask law professors and former employers to serve as references.*

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## Sample Reference Sheet

<p><b>Ima Student</b> 315 S. Plymouth Court, Apt. 222 Chicago, IL 60604 (312) 987-1402 student@law.jmls.edu</p>
<hr/> <p><b>REFERENCES</b></p> <hr/>
<p><b>Professor George Washington</b> (Legal Writing Professor) The John Marshall Law School 315 S. Plymouth Court Chicago, IL 60604 (312) 427-2737</p>
<p><b>The Honorable Ben Franklin</b> Circuit Court of Cook County Richard J. Daley Center 50 W. Washington Street, Room 1107 Chicago, IL 60602 (312) 123-4567</p>
<p><b>Ms. Outta Paper</b> Burrie Them &amp; Paper 77 W. Wacker Drive Chicago, IL 60601 (312) 411-0999</p>

## Transcripts

At some point before you are hired, an employer will probably ask for a law school transcript. An unofficial transcript is fine unless the employer specifically asks for an official transcript. Patent law students may also be asked for their undergraduate transcripts.

An official John Marshall transcript costs \$5. To get a copy, fill out a transcript request form, which is available in the Registrar's Office (3rd floor).

Once you have an official copy, you may make as many photocopies as you wish. To upload your John Marshall transcript onto Symplicity, you must scan your transcript into a PDF.

## Writing Samples

Similar to being asked for a transcript, it is likely that during the interview process an employer will ask you for a legal Writing Sample. A Writing Sample should highlight your legal reasoning and analytical skills. Keep these points in mind when choosing a Writing Sample:

- A Writing Sample should highlight your legal reasoning and analytical skills. This is your opportunity to demonstrate your legal abilities. In the end, your goal is to provide the best evidence of the skills you possess.
  - Unless an employer indicates otherwise, a Writing Sample should be 5–10 pages long. Often first-year students use a memorandum from their legal writing class that is usually longer than 10 pages. Employers understand that first-year students may not have shorter samples available yet.
  - You may include a Cover Sheet that provides the reader with context regarding the sample. Matters to address in the Cover Sheet include:
    - Original purpose of the Writing Sample
    - When and for whom the sample was originally written
    - If the Writing Sample is an excerpt, include the nature of the larger document and the context of the excerpt.
    - If confidential information has been redacted, explain the nature of what was redacted (*e.g.*, all party names have been redacted).
- You may want to use a recent Lawyering Skills memo/brief or a moot court brief; current writings will most likely reflect your best legal analysis and writing skills. Ideally, your Writing Sample will be less than two years old.
  - Typos, poor grammar, incorrect citation form, and inaccurate citations can and will be used against you. Your Writing Sample should reflect your best writing ability in all ways. Use the law school's Writing Resource Center for any assistance you seek regarding writing issues.
  - You may find that to best demonstrate your legal writing and analytical skills, you need to excerpt the legal analysis section of a larger sample. When doing so, remember to describe the nature of the larger document on the Cover Sheet, as well as the context of the analysis.
  - If you use a brief or other writing taken from a job or externship, you must obtain permission from your supervisor and redact any confidential information (including blacking out party names). The Cover Sheet should note that information has been redacted.
  - If using a Writing Sample from Lawyering Skills or from any other source where comments may have been added, do not submit a copy with comments on it. Rather, make revisions, proofread, and then submit.
  - When possible, provide to the employer a Writing Sample that demonstrates your ability to practice law in an area of interest to the employer. For example, if you are applying to work for the Environmental Protection Agency, a Writing Sample concerning environmental law may be useful.
  - Some employers have specific Writing Sample guidelines, either described in their job posting or on their website. Make sure the Writing Sample you submit adheres to such guidelines (*e.g.*, the City of Chicago's Department of Law has its own specific guidelines).
  - Do not use a Writing Sample that was co-authored.
  - At times, employers may lose your documents. Make sure to include a header or footer with at least your name.

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**Remember:** Your Writing Sample is an employer's first impression of the work product you will provide.

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## Writing Sample Cover Sheet Examples

### Sally Student

123 W. Generic Avenue • Chicago, IL 60640 • 773.555.5555 • student@law.jmls.edu

The attached writing sample was originally written as the final appellate brief for Lawyering Skills II. The argument presented was in support of *Senior* (the appellee) that summary judgment was proper when it is clear and free from doubt that *Junior* (the appellant) failed to satisfy his unconditional obligation to pay a demand note to *Senior*.

*Senior* and *Junior* entered into a lease agreement for an auto body shop that *Senior* owned and operated. The lease further provided that *Senior* would loan \$500,000 to *Junior* without interest for a five-year term. The lease was amended to indicate that *Senior* loaned an additional \$250,000 to *Junior* for a total amount of \$750,000 and to be payable on demand. Disputes arose between *Senior* and *Junior* as to the lease agreement. *Senior* made written demand for the payment of the \$750,000. *Junior's* failure to make that payment was the subject of this lawsuit.

The attached excerpt of the appellate brief addresses the following positions:

- Summary judgment is proper where it is clear and free from doubt that the demand note was an unconditional obligation that *Junior* failed to satisfy;
- There was no genuine issue of material fact that the demand note and lease agreement were separate obligations; and
- *Junior's* affidavit in response to summary judgment was improper under Illinois Supreme Court Rule 191.

I am attaching a copy of six pages of the argument section of an appellate brief that was submitted to the Illinois Supreme Court. I wrote this brief as an extern for the Appellate Defender in summer 2015. As supervising attorney, Joe Salem edited the brief and signed the final form. Mr. Salem has given me permission to use this brief as a writing sample, and has done minimal editing of the argument section.

**OR**

Attached is a copy of an argument section of my spring 2015 moot court brief on constitutional free speech guarantees. I wrote the attached section, while the subsequent sections and facts were written by my partner. Please contact me if you would like a copy of the entire brief.

**OR**

I am attaching a six-page section of a patent application I drafted this past summer. My supervising attorney, Jill Smith, has authorized me to use this application as a writing sample.

## Thank You Letters

A short thank you letter should be mailed or emailed within 24 hours of an interview to every person with whom you interviewed. If this is not practical (*e.g.*, if you interviewed with 10 people), then at least send a letter to the contact person, the hiring attorney, the attorney you would be reporting to if hired, and any other person who made a special effort to help you secure an interview (*e.g.*, a John Marshall alumnus).

Vary the wording if you interviewed with several people, since they will all end up in your file. Also, be sure to personalize the letter and try to mention topics you

discussed with the person during your interview. The thank you letter is a final way to sell yourself to a future employer and to confirm your continued interest in the position.

Thank you letters can be typed or handwritten (provided you have good, legible handwriting, and use a simple, professional card). And don't forget to proofread. A typo in a thank you letter will more than likely cost you a job opportunity.

## Sample Thank You Letter

315 S. Plymouth Court, Apt. 222  
Chicago, Illinois 60604

September 14, 2015

Ms. Hope Keeler  
Keeler & Waite  
Sears Tower  
233 S. Wacker Drive, Suite 1213  
Chicago, Illinois 60606

Dear Ms. Keeler:

Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you concerning your employment needs. I enjoyed learning the facets of your firm's services and functions. I think that my knowledge and understanding of the many areas of taxation and interest in the market economy would enable me to contribute substantially to your firm's service to its clients.

If you need transcripts, a fall class schedule, more writing samples, or recommendations, please feel free to contact me. I remain very interested in the position and would be able to begin as soon as October 1. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Ima Student



## Sample Handwritten Thank You Note

*[Date]*

*Dear Mr./Ms. [Interviewer],*

*Thank you for taking the time to meet with me earlier today regarding the [Title] position. I enjoyed our conversation and it has increased my desire to be part of your team at [Employer].*

*I believe my [Skills/Talents/Experience] make me a great fit for this role because [Why].*

*As discussed, thank you for suggesting I join the [Organization]. I will follow up on your suggestion [When/How].*

*Please contact me with any questions or comments. Thanks again for your consideration. I look forward to hearing from you.*

*Sincerely,*

*[Signature]*

*[Name]*

*[Email/Phone]*