

COVER LETTERS & CORRESPONDENCE

The University of Nebraska College of Law Career Services Office

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COVER LETTERS

OBJECTIVE

A cover letter accompanies each resume you send to an employer. The main purpose of a cover letter is for you to introduce yourself in such a way as to generate interest in your background and qualifications. Keep it brief but include information that gives the reader some insight about you. Make sure you express confidence and enthusiasm in your letter. All information provided in your cover letter must be accurate. Distortion, misrepresentation, exaggeration, or intention to include inaccurate information in your cover letter is unethical and inexcusable.

Cover letters take time to write. You need to review your own background, research the employers, and struggle with the words in order to make the cover letter unique and effective. Keep in mind sample letters and paragraphs are here to help you, but not for you to use as your own cover letter. If you copy a sample letter, you run the risk that others have done the same, and the letter will merely look like another form letter from a UNL College of Law student that is immediately filed in the trash. The more effort you put in to examining your own history and the firm, the more personal you will be able to make the letter and you will have a better shot at the letter being read.

FORMAT AND ADDRESS

A cover letter should be short, concise, and to the point, and generally should not exceed one page. Cover letters are written in traditional business letter format. Standard business practice is to include your address in the upper right side of the paper, although some line it up on the left. The addressee will be lined up on the left, four spaces below the date. Your cover letter should be consistent with the format and style of your resume (use the same font). Some experts also believe using the header from your resume at the top of the cover letter is acceptable.

Page Set-Up

You can use either block style, with all entries and margins at the very-left hand side of the page, or modified block, with certain items indented. Both styles are correct, just be sure to use them consistently. The text of your letter should be single spaced with one blank line between each of the paragraphs.

Date

Always list the current date beneath your address (the date you mail the letter out). The date can be on the line directly below the address or with one space between your address and the date.

[Street Address]
[City, State ZIP]

December 12, 2005

[Street Address]
[City, State ZIP]
December 12, 2005

COVER LETTERS & CORRESPONDENCE

Addressee's Name and Address

Address your cover letter by name to the hiring partner or recruiting coordinator. If you are unsure of the gender of the addressee, ask the receptionist to clarify when you ask for the name. If you have doubts as to the title of the person or otherwise, call the office and ask the receptionist to verify the title, the person's sex (is Terry a male or a female?), and the correct spelling of their name.

- Terry Jones
Executive Director
Jones, Abbott & Smith, P.C.
[Street Address]
[City, State ZIP]
- The Honorable Jane R. Deeds
[Court]
[Street Address]
[City, State ZIP]

Salutation

“Dear Mr. or Ms. (last name only):” is the only correct form of salutation. Do not use Mrs. or Miss, and include a colon, not a comma, after the last name. Avoid using the first and last name in the salutation.

For a judge, use “Dear Judge (or Justice) Doe:”. Use “Justice” for judges in the highest appellate court, and “Judge” for all other judges.

Complimentary Close

Close your letter with one of the standard phrases. “Very truly yours,” “Sincerely”, and “Sincerely yours” are all correct. If you have lined up your address on the right, tab your close and signature over to line up with your address.

Your Name and Signature

Type your formal name as it appears on your resume four lines below the complimentary close. Your signature should be your full name if you do not know the reader personally.

Enclosures

Indicate the inclusion of enclosed materials at the bottom of the letter by typing Enclosure or Enclosures (more than just the resume) after your name with a space between your name and Enclosures.

- Sincerely,

Elizabeth Student

Enclosures

MAIN PARAGRAPHS OF THE COVER LETTER

OPENING PARAGRAPH

Tell why you want a particular position with that particular employer

Your opening paragraph should tell the employer who you are and what type of position you are seeking. You will have to do some research on the employer. Highlight your strengths relative to the employer's needs. Cover letters should be personalized for each employer or at least for each type of employer. Mass production of cover letters has not proven to be an effective method for most job seekers. Your cover letter should give reasons why you have chosen this particular employer. There are generally three situations that would prompt you to send a resume and cover letter to an employer; a referral, job posting, or targeted mailing.

- **Referral.** If you obtained the employer's name through a contact well known to the employer or organization, make sure you say so in the opening paragraph *if* you have permission from the contact before sending the letter to the prospective employer.
 - John Doe recommended I contact you about a summer associate position with your firm.
 - I have learned a great deal about your company from Ernie Smith, a third year law student, who interned at (firm name) last summer. He encouraged me to contact you.
 - Sam Jones suggested that I apply for a summer associate position with your firm due to your firm's emphasis on employment law. I am a second year law student at the University of Nebraska College of Law with a passionate interest in employment issues.
- **Job Posting/Advertisement.** If you are responding to a posting or advertisement, include the position you are seeking and where you found the posting/ad in the opening paragraph.
 - I am a second-year law student at the University of Nebraska College of Law and I am very interested in the summer clerk position advertised in the Career Services Office at the law school.
 - In response to your posting with the University of Nebraska College of Law, I am writing to apply for the law clerk position. My interests are broad at this time, and I'm looking forward to gaining experience in a varied practice.
- **Targeted Mailing.** If you did not find out about the position through a posting or through a contact, you are sending an unsolicited mailing to an employer for whom you'd like to work. Introduce yourself as a law student and note the type of position for which you are applying. Try to mention your strongest qualification or one most related to the prospective employer. Researching the firm plays the strongest role with this type of mailing.

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- I am a second year law student at the University of Nebraska College of Law with a strong interest and extensive academic training in criminal law. I am eager to put my skills to work and I would like to pursue a law clerk position at your firm.
- After reading the September issue of *The National Law Journal* I was very intrigued by your recent work with Missouri police officers posing as minors on the Internet. I am a second year law student at the University of Nebraska College of Law and am currently pursuing the Litigation Skills Program of Concentrated Study while also taking courses in criminal law and procedure. I have a strong interest in litigation and criminal law and would welcome the opportunity to work with you as a law clerk.

Sample Opening Paragraphs

Summer Associate Positions: 1L

- Please accept my application for a position as a law clerk with Great Law and Associates for the summer of 200_. I am a first year law students at the University of Nebraska College of Law with strong research and writing skills, and a keen interest in returning home to Iowa to live and work after graduation. I am drawn to Great Law and Associates due to its strong intellectual property practice.
- I am a first year law student at the University of Nebraska College of Law and would like to work as a summer associate for Loft, Berry and Aspen.

Summer Associate Positions: 2L

- I am a second year law student at the University of Nebraska College of Law and would like to be considered for a law clerk position for the summer of 200_ with Smith, Jones, and Doe. I am committed to practicing in Nebraska and am interested in business litigation and transactions. My research suggests your firm specializes in these areas, and I believe my skills and experiences will help me to meet the needs of your clients.
- I am a second year law student at the University of Nebraska College of Law and am applying for a summer associate positions with Jones, Jones, and Dow. I am originally from Denver and plan to make Denver my home when I graduate. I am drawn to Jones, Jones, and Dow due to its specializations in corporate/business and international law.
- Angela Smith, Esq. of Jones and Jones in Omaha recommended that I contact you regarding a position as a summer law clerk. I am a second year law student at the University of Nebraska College of Law and am interested in business law and commercial transactions. Enclosed for your review is a copy of my resume and an unedited writing sample.

Post-Graduate Judicial Clerkship Positions

- I am currently a second year law student at the University of Nebraska College of Law in Lincoln, Nebraska. I am writing to apply for a position as a law clerk with your court to begin in the fall of 200_. I am especially interested in clerking with your court as I am a

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graduate of the University of Minnesota and plan to return to Minnesota to practice law after graduation.

- I am writing to apply for a position as a law clerk in your chambers to begin in the fall of 200_. My experience working as a judicial intern for Judge Doe of the Nebraska Supreme Court prepared me for the duties of a judicial clerk. I am confident based on my academic record and the evaluation which I received from Judge Doe that I can make a valuable contribution to your chambers.

Post-Graduate Positions

- I would like to be considered for an associate position with Black & Green. I am currently a third year law student at the University of Nebraska College of Law in Lincoln, Nebraska and am interested in practicing law in the area of intellectual property. I am particularly interested in Black & Green because of the firm's strong focus and reputation in the area of intellectual property.
- As a third year student at the University of Nebraska College of Law, I am looking forward to commencing my legal career after taking the Missouri bar exam in July. I would be pleased to have the opportunity to discuss a possible association with your firm upon graduation.
- Please accept my application for a position as an entry-level associate with your office. I am a third year law student at the University of Nebraska College of Law with a strong background in criminal law and litigation, solid research and writing skills, and an eager interest in returning home to Wisconsin to live and work after graduation. I realize you may not know your hiring needs at this time but would appreciate being considered for any positions that might come open in the next several months.

Clerking/Post-Graduate Public Service Positions

- I am interested in applying for an entry level position with the Omaha Public Defender's Office. In May I will graduate from the University of Nebraska College of Law and will be taking the Nebraska bar examination in July. I have completed the Litigation Skills Program of Concentrated Study and plan on pursuing my long-standing interest in criminal justice work upon graduation.
- I am a second year law student at the University of Nebraska College of Law with an interest in working in county government upon graduation. I was excited to see that your office is seeking a law student intern; I have enclosed a copy of the Supplemental Questionnaire and a resume.

Work Study

- I am a second year law student at the University of Nebraska College of Law with an interest in gaining legal experience while I attend school. I am work-study qualified and would like to apply my work-study credits to performing legal work.

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MLS Students

- I am contacting you regarding an internship opportunity at the Zoning and Planning Office. I am a Master's candidate in Legal Studies with strong research and writing skills and a background in business and political science. I have a strong interest in gaining experience in urban planning and development and believe my academic and work experience make me ideal for this position.

BODY PARAGRAPH

Emphasize your abilities

This is where you need to be persuasive in your letter. It can be one or two paragraphs. Highlight the abilities and experiences which are going to appeal to this specific employer. For example, if you have an undergraduate degree in accounting and are on the business transaction track in law school, provide this information in your cover letter and explain how your background and coursework make you uniquely qualified for the position you are seeking. You can highlight both your skills and experiences that make you qualified and your strong academic record/extra-curricular activities that you have been involved in. If you are a first year, you can also explain here that first year law students do not receive grades until the summer following their first year.

Sample Body Paragraphs

- I was interested to read a recent article in The National Law Journal highlighting your firm's general civic practice and particularly its commitment to serving the needs of the working poor. Throughout my studies, I have focused on preparing myself for a position with a general practice firm that emphasizes landlord/tenant issues, labor law, and litigation. Having had the opportunity to live in Kansas City this summer, I am eager to return upon receiving my Juris Doctor degree. The opportunity to practice with a firm committed to the diversity of a general practice in such an environment would provide me with an excellent beginning to my professional career.

My broad legal experience, extensive client counseling skills, and focused curriculum has prepared me well to contribute to a general practice firm. While at the University of Nebraska College of Law, I have studied labor law, employment law, family law, and real estate transactions and have participated in two client counseling competitions. I was also selected to participate in the law school's Civil Clinic this year. During the summer of 200_ I worked for Legal Aid of Nebraska, where I worked closely with clients on family law cases. This summer, while working as a law clerk at Zany & Todd in Kansas City, I was actively involved in all phases of civil litigation and had the opportunity to draft motions and memoranda to the court, interview clients, and attend depositions and hearings. I would be pleased to provide you with references from attorneys at the firm.

- As my resume indicates, I have a strong academic record and a variety of volunteer experiences that will make me an excellent clerk for your firm. While we do not receive our permanent grades for law school until May, my grades in legal writing have been at the A level. Through volunteering for a year as a Guardian Ad Litem, I became skilled in researching matters related to child abuse and neglect. I am fluent in Spanish and spent a summer doing volunteer work in Mexico while in college. Because Scout, Boo & Radley

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LLP specializes in juvenile and immigration law, my skills and experiences would be beneficial to your firm.

- My first year of law school has confirmed my awareness of the necessity of providing representation to the poor and under-represented in our society. I am eager to utilize the skills I am acquiring in a real world setting. As a native Nebraskan who plans on returning to North Platte for the summer, I would be particularly pleased to work with your organization this summer. A position with Legal Aid of Nebraska would provide me with an outstanding legal experience while enabling me to contribute to the representation of Nebraska citizens.

I believe my academic and practical experience make me well suited for a position with your organization. During my first year at the University of Nebraska College of Law I will receive two semesters of instruction in legal research and writing. While we do not receive our permanent grades for courses until the summer, my grades on the assignments I have received have been strong. I am currently a member of Equal Justice Works, and attained a leadership role in my class as a first year representative to the Student Bar Association. While attending the University of Nebraska at Kearney for my undergraduate degree, I volunteered for the Friendship home and answered phones for a battered women's hotline. I believe that these experiences can be well utilized in the public interest context and am eager to gain exposure to the functioning of a public interest law office.

- My interest in international law stems from my major in international business and trade and a semester abroad as an undergraduate in Tokyo, Japan where I learned to speak proficient Japanese. I was able to intern while pursuing my undergraduate degree with Jones and Roberts, a major exporter of goods based in Seattle, Washington. I enjoyed the challenging issues raised while considering trade decisions, and liked being a part of resolving potential disputes and researching various issues. I have performed well academically, and am currently in the top one-third of my class. I have proven leadership abilities, as evidenced by my positions as resident advisor in my residence hall my sophomore year and philanthropy chair of my sorority my junior year, where I increased participation in volunteer activities by 40%.
- During the last academic semester, I worked in the Law College's Criminal Law Clinic. In that capacity, I interviewed witnesses, drafted pleadings, and handled all aspects of discovery. I was even able to prosecute a misdemeanor case in the Lancaster County Court as a senior certified law student. Not only did I greatly enjoy my experience in the courtroom, I was able to secure a guilty verdict in the case.

It is my professional goal to work for a small firm with an emphasis in litigation. That goal, along with my focus on litigation coursework and clinical experience, make me an ideal candidate for the associate position with your firm. I am able to take immediate responsibility for a caseload that includes a heavy schedule of court appearances and look forward to building a strong reputation as a trial attorney.

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- As my resume indicates, I have the academic record and law review experience you require. I also possess the enthusiasm and work ethic needed to be a dedicated and reliable judicial clerk.

Along with my resume, I have enclosed a copy of my law school transcript and a writing sample for your review. Three letters of recommendation will be sent to you under separate cover by the individuals listed on my reference sheet. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you require any additional information to complete my application.

- My commitment to the field of tax law is long standing. As my enclosed resume indicates, my experience and education would enable me to make a substantial contribution. I hold an undergraduate degree in accounting from Iowa State University where I was graduated *magna cum laude*. Upon graduation, I strongly considered several offers to join the auditing departments of accounting firms. However, I decided to enter law school and pursue my interest in tax law.

Having finished my second year of law school, I have successfully completed courses in Partnership Tax, Corporate Tax, and Estate Planning. In addition to maintaining a strong academic standing, I have accumulated significant legal writing and research experience as a clerk with Davis law firm.

- In the course of researching Dooley, Jones & Smith, I discovered that your firm prefers to hire summer clerks with prior legal experience. As a law clerk I have gained practical experience in both estate planning and civil litigation. Last summer at James, Barker & Loft, LLP, I worked on probate matters and drafted simple wills and contracts. I also drafted pleadings, assisted the attorneys in preparing for trial, and performed extensive legal research and writing. In order to sharpen my litigation skills, I am currently taking Trial Advocacy and will participate in the National Trial Competition this fall.

CLOSING PARAGRAPH

Request an interview

Remember, the purpose of your cover letter and resume is to get your foot in the door for an interview. If you are going to be in the employer's city at a particular time, say so. You can even offer to call the employer to set up an interview during your visit. Make sure you provide the employer with your contact information. Offer to provide any additional information that they may need. Don't forget to thank them for their time and attention in reviewing your application.

Sample Closing Paragraphs

- I would appreciate the opportunity to meet with you and discuss my interest in a summer associate position with your firm. I will be in Kansas City during the week of December 26th, and will call your office in advance of my visit to see if a meeting can be arranged. Please feel free to contact me if I can provide you with any further information. I can be reached at (402)555-2123 or by email at student@bigred.unl.edu. Thank you for your consideration.

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- I would very much appreciate the opportunity to meet with you to further discuss my interest in your firm. I will be happy to travel to Minneapolis to meet with you and other members of the firm at your convenience. Thank you for consideration of my application and I look forward to hearing from you soon.
- I would appreciate the opportunity to meet with you to discuss my interest in working at your office. I will call your office in the next two weeks to see if it would be possible to arrange for an interview. In the meantime, please contact me at (402) 555-2231 if you would like any further information. Thank you for your time and consideration.
- I am very interested in using my skills as an advocate for children in Nebraska. Please review the enclosed resume and consider me for your law clerk opening. I would value the opportunity to work with your organization. If you would like to meet, please contact me at (402) 525-7725 or dstudent1@aol.com.

I look forward to hearing from you soon.

AFTER IT IS WRITTEN

Proofread several times! Have at least two other people read it as well (bring it by the CSO and we can check it too). Perfection in grammar, spelling, and neatness truly counts. This is the first writing sample the employer will see from you; you want to make sure it looks perfect. You can try reading it out loud; this can help you to catch some mistakes.

Double check the name. Make sure the name and address on the letter match the name on the salutation and the name and address on the envelope.

Paper/Printing. Your cover letter should be printed (laser printer) neatly on paper that matches your resume.

Copies. Keep a copy of the correspondence you send out for your own records so you know what you sent and to whom you sent it.

Record dates/Follow up. Keep a record of the dates you sent out letters and resumes, and mark down on your planner/calendar when you need to follow up. Generally you should call to follow up somewhere between 10 days to two weeks after you send your application materials.

THANK YOU LETTERS

PURPOSE OF THE THANK YOU

A thank you letter should be sent anytime you've interviewed with someone, whether it is an informational interview, a job interview, or even a particularly helpful telephone call. While many employers often say they don't consider thank you letters much one way or another, others still report to us that they appreciate the gesture following an interview. Barring sending a letter with typographical errors, sending a thank you is a polite gesture that can't hurt. In the end, it's not so much what you say in the letter as the fact that you make this gesture, and failing to do so could draw attention to you (if everyone else sent one) and may be perceived as a lack of enthusiasm, responsiveness, organization, or manners.

You typically do *not* need to send a thank-you after a brief on-campus screening interview.

GUIDELINES

A handwritten note on nice stationery can be appropriate, as well as a more traditional business style format. Most sources agree however that the "safest" approach is to type the letter on business-quality stationery/resume paper, rather than writing it out by hand in a note card (since typed correspondence is for business and handwritten cards are personal). Email thank you letters are generally not appropriate. The first paragraph should express your gratitude and possibly any conversation that was of particular interest during the interview, or any common ties between you and the interviewer. The second paragraph should mention any enclosures or other material that requires attention. The last paragraph should reiterate your interest in the organization and advise them to contact you if they need any additional information or materials.

For a telephone contact or informational interview, thank them for their time and refer to something that you talked about or how you plan to follow up on the information they provided (e.g., "thank you for your suggestions as to which courses would be most helpful before I graduate", or "thank you for suggesting I meet with Joe Bradford, I have already contacted his office and set up a meeting with him for Tuesday afternoon"). For a job interview, you will want to reiterate your continued interest in the firm and the reasons why you would be an excellent choice for the position.

The letter should be brief and should be sent to the person(s) with whom you interviewed. If you interviewed with more than one person, you may want to send a letter to each individual. Or, if you interviewed with a large number of people, you can send the thank you letter to the person who arranged the interviews and ask that person to convey your thanks to the others. Be aware, however, that some employers have shared with us that this can come across as an order or assignment and therefore a turn-off. They think you should thank people yourself. If you do decide to send a thank you to each individual, make sure you make them each a little different, they will all probably end up in the same file and may be compared. At the very least, use a different opening sentence and personalize the letter in some way.

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The most important thing is that you **keep it short and sweet, and do not have any typographical errors**. A thank you will most likely not *get* you a job, but an error-ridden thank you *could lose* you a job. Make sure you run a spell check and try reading it out loud to make sure it sounds ok, as well as make sure you have the recipient's name spelled correctly and the right address (both of which can be checked with a quick phone call to the firm).

TIMEFRAME

Sending the letter within 24 hours of the interview is ideal. You have a better chance that you are still fresh in their mind and the thank you can reinforce a positive impression you made during the interview. It will also help you to recall details of the conversations you had. Sending a thank you past 24 hours (a week, ten days later), is still better than not sending one at all.

SAMPLE THANK YOU LETTERS

Job Interviews

Jane L. Doe
1536 Hewitt Avenue
Lincoln, NE 68504

January 1, 2006

Ms. Sally Q. Public
A, B, C Law Firm
123 Sesame Street
Omaha, NE 57403

Dear Ms. Public:

Thank you for the opportunity to visit your firm during my recent semester break. I found the friendly and professional atmosphere very appealing.

As mentioned in the interview, I have always intended to return to Omaha following law school. I would really like to work for your firm and hope that the feeling is mutual.

Please feel free to contact me a home (612) 123-4566 or work (612) 765-4321 if an employment opportunity arises. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Jane L. Doe

COVER LETTERS & CORRESPONDENCE

Jack Spratt
1536 Hewitt Avenue
Lincoln, NE 68504

January 1, 2006

The Honorable Alice Public
United States District Court
United States Courthouse
Kansas City, MO 23456

Dear Judge Jones:

Thank you for interviewing me last Tuesday. I appreciate the time you took to speak with me about your clerkship position. I would like to reiterate my interest in serving as your clerk upon my graduation in May 2006.

Enclosed please find the writing sample you requested. If I can provide you with any additional information, please let me know. You can reach me at the above address or at (612) 222-3333. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Jack Spratt

Enclosure

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1536 Hewitt Avenue
Lincoln, NE 68504
(612) 123-4569

September 16, 2006

Stephen Supervisor
Executive Director
Legal Services for Children
123 Court Street South
Omaha, NE 55401

Dear Mr. Supervisor:

I would like to thank you and your staff for the wonderful visit I had to your office last week. My interest in the position has only grown by seeing your staff's commitment and enthusiasm for protecting the rights of children.

I was particularly interested in the outreach project initiated by your staff attorney, John Smith, with the local Bar Association to increase pro bono work for children's right done by attorneys in the Omaha area. I am happy to volunteer with this program. Bringing together social workers and attorney's is bridging a gap that has grown too wide.

At your request, I have attached a copy of my transcript and writing sample. If you need further material, please do not hesitate to call me. I look forward to hearing from you within the next two weeks. Thank you again for your time.

Sincerely,

Jane Doe

Enclosures: 1. Transcript
2. Writing Sample

cc: John Smith

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Informational Interview

[Street Address]

[City, State ZIP]

February 10, 200_

Mr. Bob Smiley
Dooley & Biggs, LLP
232 "O" Street
Lincoln, NE 68508

Dear Mr. Smiley:

Thank you for meeting with me regarding my interest in practicing immigration law. I really appreciate your advice and encouragement. I have revised my resume according to your suggestions, and have enclosed a copy of the new version.

I have contacted Roberta Stick at Legal Aid as you suggested, and am having lunch with her next week. I plan on contacting other people you mentioned this week and hope to arrange meetings with all of them.

I will keep you informed as to my job search progress. If you think of any additional information that might be helpful or if a position in your firm becomes available, I would appreciate being contacted. I again truly appreciate your help.

Sincerely,

Randall Taylor

Enclosure

ACCEPTANCE/REJECTION LETTERS

NALP STANDARDS

Reaffirmation of offers: Law students must reaffirm their continued interest in an offer within 30 days from the date of the offer letter. Employers may retract any offer that is not reaffirmed by the student.

Response dates: The guidelines provide specific dates for responding to offers, which depend upon when the offer was received and whether the offer is from an employer for whom the student has worked previously. Generally, a student must respond to an offer from a prior summer employer by November 1 and to other offers by December 1. Students are expected to accept or release offers or negotiate an extension of the response date by the applicable deadline. There are exceptions, and in some cases other arrangements may be made with the employer.

Holding offers open: A student who holds many offers creates a hardship both for the employers, who do not know how many more offers to make, and for fellow students, who are waiting to receive the offers that are not accepted. Therefore, the guidelines set limits on the number of offers a student may hold at one time.

After September 15 a student should not hold open more than five offers of employment simultaneously; after October 1 a student should not hold open more than four offers simultaneously; and after October 15 a student should not hold open more than three offers simultaneously. Offers of employment include those received as a result of previous summer employment. For each offer received that places a student over the offer limit, the student should, within one week of receipt of the excess offer, release an offer.

Second and third year students may, with the consent of the employer, extend one offer beyond December 1.

NALP: ACCEPTING AND DECLINING OFFERS

All job offers, salaries, terms of employment, etc., should be made in writing by the employer, and your acceptance should always be confirmed in writing.

If you know your decision before the deadline date, you should communicate that to the employer. If you know you are not going to accept a particular offer, you should tell the employer immediately.

Once you have accepted an offer, do not renege. Accepting a job offer and then calling back at a later date to say you've changed your mind can be a dangerous game. There may be circumstances which force you into this kind of unfortunate action, but professional circles are small and memories are long. Treat a potential employer as fairly as you expect to be treated yourself.

HOW TO RESPOND

It is common to respond to an offer in the manner it was made (phone, letter), although it is not necessary. You can leave a rejection on voice mail, but do not leave it late at night to avoid talking to someone; voice mail messages are played with times and the tactic will appear obvious. If you do reject by phone, it is good to follow up with a letter, especially if you leave a voice mail, so it is in your records and theirs.

The best addressee is the person who made you the offer. If you decline by phone, you can send the follow up letter to the recruiting coordinator, who will probably be the one to keep the information on file. If you do send reject by phone, make a note of who you had the conversation with in the letter.

ACCEPTANCE LETTER

For an acceptance letter, you should start by accepting the offer and stating the term or starting date (if a permanent position). Also include by whom the offer was made, and reiterate your acceptance.

In the second paragraph, indicate any future actions with the employer or information you expect to convey to them, such as your anticipated availability or specific starting date of employment, or if you plan to follow up with an individual at the organization at a future date to verify details regarding your employment.

Finish with a sincere statement of gratitude or your anticipation for working with the organization.

REJECTION LETTER

Indicate you are rejecting the offer, noting the date and by whom the offer was made.

In the second paragraph, you can include any explanation you feel is necessary for rejecting their offer. You do not need to volunteer a lot of information, just be direct and very polite. They may have several questions, so including some information here or in the phone call may help a little, such as you're grateful for the offer, you very much appreciate their time and effort, it's a difficult decision when faced with a number of interesting choices, but you have a limited amount of time and you couldn't do everything, and you think another option is best for you for this summer (or words to that effect). You can volunteer the name of the firm where you'll be working (although you certainly don't have to). You may want to keep your options open in the future, politeness is key.

Conclude by thanking them for their offer and their attention.