

Communication Audit: Job Application (Cover) Letters

Name: _____ Topic: _____ Rater: _____

A. Content & Argument Impact	Discuss your SQAs—Skills, Qualifications, & Accomplishments
1. Write an opening sentence that identifies purpose of letter & incorporates their job title....	1 2 3 4
2. Demonstrate your knowledge of the field and of the organization in the 1st paragraph.....	1 2 3 4
3. Include a compelling sentence in 1st paragraph that explains what you might contribute...	1 2 3 4
4. Relate the content of your letter to match specific job specifications & requirements.....	1 2 3 4
5. Include 2-3 sentence accomplishment stories relevant to target job in middle paragraphs	1 2 3 4
6. Incorporate quantified results or actions in sentences to give readers a sense of scale.....	1 2 3 4
7. Compare some accomplishments & achievements with benchmarks/industry standards	1 2 3 4
8. Give reader a compelling reason (in the last paragraph) for interviewing you over others	1 2 3 4
9. Indicate interest by suggesting dates & times when you're available for interviews.....	1 2 3 4
10. Indicate your enthusiasm in the last paragraph by offering to follow up on your letter.....	1 2 3 4
B. Structural & Organizational Impact	Make it easy for busy reader to grasp
11. Adopt a direct, bottom-line organization, placing most important info 1st in paragraph...	1 2 3
12. Write parallel ideas and content using parallel form/structure (e.g., the resume).....	1 2 3
13. Give new or expanded material in your letter & avoid repeating identical info in resume	1 2 3
C. Tone & Writing Style Impact	Adopt a pithy, storytelling style with confident tone
14. Write concise sentences that convey your “complete” message w/ fewest possible words	1 2 3
15. Write sentences with an actor or agency as the subject to maintain an active voice.....	1 2 3
16. Select strong action-oriented verbs, replacing weak verbs like is, was, are, be.....	1 2 3
17. Use encouraging, positive language--avoid threatening language & negative tones.....	1 2 3
18. Use language & diction that demonstrate familiarity with target position/industry.....	1 2 3
19. Use standard American grammar, syntax, spelling, and punctuation.....	1 2 3
20. Follow a plain-language style/tone for writing & ask: Do people actually talk this way?	1 2 3
21. Avoid modesty as you market your SQA's*--while you avoid being boastful/pretentious	1 2 3
22. Adopt a reader-focused point-of-view, showing reader's benefits, avoiding writer P.O.V.	1 2 3
D. Layout & Design Impact	Create a letter that appeals to the reader's eye
23. Supply complete contact info at the top of your letter to permit easy ID and follow-up	1 2
24. Date letter & identify intended audience so reader can determine relevancy/currentness	1 2
25. Use a serif font size of approx. 11-12 points in the body of your document.....	1 2
26. Limit your use of fonts to one or two fonts to eliminate visual distractions.....	1 2
27. Limit sentences to 20 words or less to allow reader to rapidly parse & store idea in STM	1 2
28. Limit paragraphs to 2-6 sentences to allow reader to rapidly parse & store ideas in LTM	1 2
29. Use single spacing between lines in paragraphs, & 1 1/2 spacing for any bullet highlights	1 2
30. Avoid underlining in your letter to give the document a more professional look.....	1 2
31. Make margins 3/4" & leave right-hand margin ragged (unjustified) to reduce eye strain	1 2
32. Use standard Left-Margin or Center-Margin Alignment w/standard salutation & closing	1 2
33. Create a visual balance between printed text/visual aids & surrounding white space.....	1 2
34. Limit your letter to one page containing four or five paragraphs.....	1 2
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