

What is a Writing Sample?

Some employers may request that you submit a writing sample along with your resume and cover letter. This enables the employer to evaluate your writing skills and determine your communication style. Any position which requires writing may include a writing sample as part of the application requirements. Fields that commonly require writing samples include editing, publishing, research, and law.

The length of the writing sample is usually determined by the employer. However, as a general rule samples should not exceed five pages in length.

Students often wonder what the writing sample should be about. If the employer does not specify a certain topic, pick something that interests you and that relates somewhat to the field you are entering. A common rule of thumb is to choose something that closely resembles the type of work that the job entails. For example, if you are applying for a job at a newspaper, then an article that you wrote for the campus newspaper would be very appropriate. Do not write about a topic that may be construed as controversial in nature.

Many students use previous class papers as their writing sample. This is perfectly acceptable, just be sure that you submit a clean copy that does not have a professor's marks on it. If you wish to use an extract from a larger piece of writing, just be sure to write an introductory paragraph to put your selection in context for the reader.

As with any material that you submit to a prospective employer, your writing sample should be grammatically correct and free of typographical errors and misspellings. Additionally, be careful to omit any confidential and privileged information from your writing sample. For example, if you are submitting a case study, delete names or any other identifying information.

Students who are applying to an organization through eRecruiting.com can upload a writing sample in the same manner as resumes and cover letters are uploaded. Simply select "writing sample" from the drop-down box in the Upload Documents section before you submit your writing sample. There is no limit as to how many writing samples you can upload to eRecruiting.

Career counselors are available to critique your writing sample. Feel free to stop by during drop-in hours or call extension 1740 for an appointment.