Writing Samples: tips, tricks and helpful advice

Why do some hiring processes require a writing sample?

Writing samples can show an employer a lot about how you communicate through your writing style, vocabulary use and how you structure sentences and thoughts. If in a role, you will be responsible for writing and communicating important information or correspondences, employers might also ask for a writing sample.

Things to consider for strong writing samples

Match the sample with the job – match the style and topic
Take the time to read all of the requirements for the writing sample. Some positions require writing samples on a specific topic or may have length requirements. To ensure you don’t disqualify yourself before you get the chance to interview, submit all of the documents requested and in the format they have requested.

Chose a writing sample – use an academic or published article review for content, spelling, and grammar
Employers may immediately move onto another candidate if they see spelling or grammatical mistakes. Always revise and check your work before submitting. Having a friend or profession give you feedback on your work can help you with the revision process.

Follow the employer’s directions – use the correct format and length, and bring a writing sample to an interview – print multiple copies just in case
Employers are trying to see if you can follow directions and can convey your knowledge of the industry or position to which you are applying. This means making sure the sample you select is appropriate for the position to which you’re applying. For example, if you’re applying for a public relations position, you may want to send a sample press release. If you’re applying for a position in the legal field, they may want to see an excerpt of a legal brief. Sometimes you will have to create a piece of writing just for the purpose of the writing sample.

Being aware of what to send and what to avoid
Avoid sending incomplete writings, poems, short stories, essays, or research papers unless specifically requested. The key word for all writing is relevance. Is what you’re sending relevant to the position you are applying for? If you are not sure what to send, it is okay to reach out to the hiring organization for more clarification of what they are expecting.

Don’t forget
Students can take advantage of the writing center to stand out and double check their grammar. Visit them today at tutoring.asu.edu.

Ensure your writing sample is the best reflection of you and your writing style. A solid writing sample can place you far ahead of other candidates who submitted equally strong applications.