

PREPARING YOUR APPLICATION DOCUMENTS FOR ELECTRONIC SUBMISSION

Most jobs today require you to apply by filling out online forms or by sending your documents directly to the employer by email. This handout provides tips and best practices for submitting your job application documents electronically.

General Considerations

Whenever you apply for a job, you are likely to be one of many candidates. For every job posting, a recruiter might receive dozens or even hundreds of emails or online submissions, all with attachments. When faced with a giant stack of applications, recruiters look for easy ways to weed out candidates. If your application materials are sloppy, contain typos, don't comply with the employer's instructions, or otherwise create a negative impression, your application is likely to land in the "no" pile before anyone even reviews your substantive qualifications. Likewise, if your application gets lost in the shuffle because it is poorly labeled, you could lose out on an opportunity. When submitting your application, take a few extra precautions to make sure it doesn't get lost or tossed!

Label Your Document Files Properly

To prevent your application from getting lost or misidentified, make sure your documents are clearly and unambiguously identifiable by giving each file a name that identifies you as the applicant as well as the type of document you are submitting. *The best practice is to conform to the following naming convention:*

Format: [Your Name] [Document Description].pdf

Example: Jane Smith Application.pdf

You should apply this naming convention to ALL job application documents.

Including at least your last name in the document title is imperative. Do not use the name of the EMPLOYER to name your documents. While this may be convenient for you, from the employer's perspective, a document titled with the name of its own organization does little to help identify the candidate. Also, naming a document by employer puts you at risk of inadvertently sending one employer a document labeled with another employer's name. Employers will not view this favorably.

Submit "Read Only" Versions

In addition to ensuring that your documents are clearly associated with you, you should also take care that they cannot be tampered with accidentally or intentionally. This can

happen if the recipient opens one of your files, which is in an editable format, and accidentally types or deletes information before saving the document.

To prevent this, you should always submit “Read Only” versions of your documents.. The best practice is to save your application documents in Adobe PDF format. The easiest way to accomplish this is to Print to PDF. Sending documents in PDF will also protect you from inadvertently submitting documents with redline edits or comments bubbles that may be visible to the recipient in certain settings in Word.

Ideally, you should submit ONE PDF file containing all of your application documents, rather than creating separate PDF files for your cover letter, resume, transcript, etc. Each document should start on a separate page, but your entire submission should be combined into one PDF. This way the recruiter can open one document, instead of having to click through and save or print each application document separately.

If you do not have the full version of Adobe, you can combine multiple PDF documents with free program downloads. While the Career Center does not endorse any specific software application, and the one that works best for you may depend on your computer hardware, available programs include PDF Creator and Cute PDF.

Applying by Email

When you apply to a job by sending your documents to an email address, you may include a short message in the body of the email in addition to -- never instead of -- sending a cover letter along with any other requested documents. As a general rule, do not paste the full text of your cover letter in your email. At some point, your documents will be printed out for the employer’s review, and a professional, properly formatted cover letter will always look more polished than a printed email. Of course, some job postings may instruct you to include your cover letter in the body of your email, and there may be other circumstances where it makes sense to do so.

Short Email Message Format

If you include an email message along with your application, it should be short and concise. You should explain (1) who you are, (2) why you are sending this email, (3) what you are attaching and (4) how to contact you if there is a problem. In most instances your @law.gwu.edu is the most appropriate email address to use for professional correspondence. If you choose to use another email address, it should also be a professional address, such as your first initial and last name. Do not use email addresses that may appear unprofessional, such as ilovepooh@yahoo.com.

Sample Email Message 1

Dear Mr. Jones:

I am a first - year student at The George Washington University Law School. Please accept the attached resume and cover letter as my application for the summer associate position at Jones and Jonas P.C. Please feel free to contact me by phone or

by email if you have a problem accessing the documents or require any additional information.

Sincerely,

Jane Smith
(202) 555 - 1234

Sample Email Message 2

Dear Ms. Anderson:

I am a rising third - year student at The George Washington University Law School and am writing to apply for the part - time law clerk position at Brown and Baker, LLP that was advertised on LegalJobs.com. Please find attached my resume and cover letter. If you require any additional information or have trouble downloading the attachments, please feel free to contact me by email or by phone.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Jane Smith
(202) 555 - 1234

Using the Full Text of your Cover Letter as Your Email Message

There may be times you choose to use your formal cover letter as your email message, particularly when you wish to immediately highlight your skills and interests in the employer. If you do choose to paste the full text of your cover letter as your email, the email should still be formatted as formal business correspondence. This means using a formal addressee block, salutation, body, and signature. If you use this method, you should still include your cover letter as part of your attached application document with your resume and other application materials.

Applying Online

Online applications often require that you cut and paste a copy of one or more of your job search documents into a form in addition to, or sometimes instead of, uploading the document. If you try to cut and paste from your (heavily) formatted original document, particularly resumes, you will likely spend a lot of time re-formatting the text so that it looks presentable in the online form.

To save yourself some time and energy, you should maintain a copy of each of your job search documents in plain text format. This will allow you to easily and quickly copy the text of your document to the online form, and also will ensure that you are submitting text that you have carefully proofread. For example, reformat your resume as follows:

Reformat your resume from this...	...to this.
<p>Maya M. Beerling 123 Gratin Way · Vienna, VA 23456 · (703) 123-4567 mbeerling@law.gwu.edu</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;"><u>EDUCATION</u></p> <p>THE GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY LAW SCHOOL Washington, DC <i>J.D., Expected May 20xx, GPA: 3.395</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Member, Black Law Students Association • Participant, Moot Court and Negotiation Skills Competitions <p style="text-align: center;"><u>EXPERIENCE</u></p> <p>OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL CIVIL LITIGATION DIVISION, Washington, DC <i>Legal Intern May 20xx – present</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draft motions to stay, motions for expansion of time, motion for partial summary judgment, cross-- claims, answers, interrogatories, affidavits, and requests for production • Research case law and draft memoranda regarding false arrest and imprisonment, wrongful death, and qualified immunity defense • Draft deposition outline, prepare exhibits, and assist during trial 	<p>Maya M. Beerling 123 Gratin Way Vienna, VA 23456 (703) 123-4567 mbeerling@law.gwu.edu</p> <p>EDUCATION</p> <p>THE GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY LAW SCHOOL Washington, DC J.D. expected, May 20xx, GPA: 3.395 --- Member, Black Law Students Association --- Participant, Moot Court and Negotiation Skills Competitions</p> <p>EXPERIENCE</p> <p>OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL CIVIL LITIGATION DIVISION Washington, DC Legal Intern, May 20xx – present --- Draft motions to stay, motions for expansion of time, motion for partial summary judgment, cross-- claims, answers, interrogatories, affidavits, and requests for production --- Research case law and draft memoranda regarding false arrest and imprisonment, wrongful death, and qualified immunity defense --- Draft deposition outline, prepare exhibits, and assist during trial</p>

Once you have saved your resume in plain text format, you should save a copy and give it a file name that will allow you to easily recognize it as such. For example, if the file for your formatted resume is “Smith.Resume.doc”, you should name your plain text format resume “Smith.Resume.PlainText.doc”.

Final Tips

Remember, you only get one chance to make a good first impression. Take a few extra minutes to review your electronic application materials so you don't give the employer an easy way to weed your application out. Always double check for typos, spelling errors, internal formatting inconsistencies, and grammar mistakes in your documents. Look at your PDF file name and make sure it doesn't contain a typo. If you can avoid it, don't put off submitting your application until 11:59 PM of the application deadline – employers will notice! Finally, get in the habit of opening and reviewing every file you attach to an email or upload to an electronic form before you hit "send."