

Cover letters and negotiations

- Cover letters get you into a job, then you ALWAYS want to negotiate
- ConnectSC has a ton of great resources for all kinds of career development stuff
 - Careers.usc.edu -> navigate to connectSC menu for students -> online resources
- Can also make an appointment with/walk in to career center for help/resources
- Career center has a youtube page with a bunch of easy-to-digest presentations
- Negotiating for women video:
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ls8DTx7QVzY>

1. Cover letters

- a. Expresses interest and demonstrates qualifications/experience/skills and abilities
- b. Gets you through the screening process, because the reader wants to look at your resume
- c. Demonstrates writing skills
- d. Some useful catchphrases
 - i. "I am particularly well-qualified for this position because..."
 - ii. "Examples of my passion for doing the job well are..."
 - iii. "Working as <previous position>, I obtained the following skills..."
 - iv. "I believe this is a position where my passion for the job will grow because of the opportunities you provide."
 - v. "I am very excited to learn more about this opportunity and share how I will be a great fit for your company."
 - vi. "Your position for <job title> strongly appeals to me because..."
 - vii. "I look forward to meeting with you to further discuss my background."
- e. DON'T use hedging language
- f. Be your own advocate
- g. Keep your cover letter and resume format consistent
 - i. Different font sizes are ok, just keep the same header, font, etc. the same between the two
- h. You should NEVER assume gender – refer to the hiring manager by name (i.e. "Dear Dana")
- i. If you don't know who the hiring manager: perfectly good to use "dear hiring manager" or "re: <job title>"
 - i. Never "to whom it may concern" or "dear sir/madam"
- j. 3-5 paragraphs! That's it.
- k. Opening paragraph
 - i. Reference position by name
 - ii. Include how you found the job
 - iii. Use name of contact person, if available
 - iv. Include educational background
 - v. Explain interest in position in organization
- l. Paragraph 2
 - i. Include specific examples of experience/skills/qualifications
 - ii. Show employer why you are qualified
 - iii. Highlight talents and abilities
- m. Paragraph 3
 - i. Sell yourself to employer
 - ii. Show why you are qualified
 - iii. Also consider additional experiences
 - iv. If a buzzword is used in the advertisement, use that buzzword in your cover letter!
 - v. LinkedIn top 10 most in-demand skills

1. Communication
 2. Organization
 3. Teamwork
 4. Always punctual
 5. Critical thinking
 6. Social skills
 7. Creativity
 8. Interpersonal communication
 9. Adaptability
 10. Friendly personality
- vi. Molecular biology key skills
1. Attention to detail
 2. Critical thinking skills
 3. Observation skills
 4. Organization skills
 5. Interpersonal skills
- n. Closing – last paragraph
- i. Restate interest and qualifications in position
 - ii. Indicate next step/follow up
 - iii. State interest in an interview in a polite way
 - iv. Use 3 adjectives you're bringing to the job
- o. Signature
- i. Hard copy submission: leave 4 lines between 'Sincerely' and your typed name for your signature
 - ii. Online submission: leave 2 lines between 'Sincerely' and your typed name (no signature) or if you use an electronic signature do the same thing as for a hard copy submission
- p. Following up
- i. 1 week after you apply
 - ii. Ask about the status of the job/timeline for hire for the job
 - iii. Call HR, make sure you know who to talk to
 - iv. If you leave a message on the phone, leave your name and phone number at the beginning and end of the message
 - v. If you follow up every day, you get on their bad side
- q. Remember: most companies have a software that filters applicants. These softwares are looking for specific buzzwords (probably buzzwords used in the job description) to move an applicant up.
- r. If applying to a job online, if PDF isn't specifically asked for, use a word doc (most of these softwares don't do PDFs so your application will get thrown out if you use a PDF)
- s. Tailor your cover letter to the job
- i. Qualitative vs. quantitative language – tailor that to the job (does it seem like they're looking for qualitative or quantitative qualities?)
- t. Even if you don't think you don't match their job description, STILL apply! Especially women – don't second guess yourself
- u. REMEMBER TO PROOFREAD
- v. Even if an employer doesn't ask for a cover letter, send one anyway

2. Negotiations

- a. Anything is negotiable
 - i. Title
 - ii. Salary

- iii. Hours
- iv. Telecommuting
- v. Flexible schedule
- vi. Responsibilities/opportunities
- vii. Signing bonus/relocation
- viii. Performance-based bonuses and commissions
 - 1. In CA, bonuses are taxed way higher than normal salary, so if you're offered a bonus you may want to negotiate for a salary increase instead
- ix. Location
- x. Vehicles/phones/IT equipment
- xi. Parking
- b. Why don't most people negotiate?
 - i. Makes people nervous
 - ii. Don't want to seem difficult
 - iii. Afraid they won't get what they want
 - iv. Don't know how to ask for more
 - v. Afraid they won't get the job or have their offer pulled by the employer
 - vi. Afraid to end up with a lower salary
- c. Do your research to see what people with that job title at other companies make – that will help you figure out what reasonable salary negotiations will be
 - i. "Based on the research I've done, this is what I've found to be the range/reasonable"
- d. If you have to write in your desired salary for a job, write 'negotiable'
- e. "Is there movement in the salary?" is a great way to ask for higher salary
- f. Don't give round numbers for a salary range when you're negotiating – the math is really easy for people to do, and you don't want to make the math easy for them
- g. What do I say when asked about salary?
 - i. Let's talk about the job requirement and expectations first, so I can get a better sense of what you need
 - ii. My requirements are negotiable, depending on the responsibilities of the position
 - iii. I'm just completing my graduate degree and have a new set of qualification, experience, and level of expertise so I don't have comparable salary history data
 - iv. My current salary is reflective of my current position. After we discuss the responsibilities for this position, I am confident we will come to an amount that is fair and equitable for both of us
 - v. According to the research I've done, this is what I think would be reasonable
- h. Negotiation-related websites
 - i. Payscale.com
 - ii. Glassdoor.com
 - iii. Bls.gov
 - iv. Cbssalary.com
 - v. Salary.com
 - vi. Onetonline.org
- i. In order to gain the greatest leverage, don't negotiate salary until an offer is forthcoming
- j. Don't be afraid to postpone a conversation regarding salary until you are ready to negotiate
- k. Know the worth of the new skills you have gained in order to justify the salary increase
- l. Get your offer in writing!
- m. It's totally fine to ask for a couple of days to think about the offer

- n. Negotiate salary/benefits over the phone! (In person is so much harder for a just-hired negotiation. Over the phone you can refer to your notes and not worry about looking flustered or anything)
- o. Using other job offers as leverage
 - i. DO NOT MAKE ANYTHING UP – people know each other
 - ii. “I do have an offer from <other company>, they’re offering me <X salary/benefits>, but I’d really love to work for you so I’m hoping there will be some movement here”
- p. Before negotiating
 - i. Do informational interviews with other people in the company (not the person you’re interviewing with)! This will give you insight into company dynamics, morale, maternity/paternity leave, etc.
 - ii. Do more research on industry and organization (what’s happening in the geographical region? How is the company/industry doing?)
 - iii. Re-read/review job description and offer letter (and highlight areas of discussion, if any)
 - iv. Investigate several salary websites for position/similar job title (see “Negotiation-related websites” above)
 - v. Email recruiter to arrange time for discussion
- q. Have a budget made
 - i. Housing, clothing, food
 - ii. Transportation/car
 - iii. Insurance (medical, home, car)
 - iv. Lifestyle/cost of living in location
 - v. Bills/debt and taxes
 - vi. Support for family members/pets
- r. Understanding limits
 - i. Prospective employees think about:
 - 1. What is my need vs. want?
 - 2. What is the min I can accept?
 - 3. What is the max I can ask for?
 - ii. Employer thinks about:
 - 1. What is the least we can offer?
 - 2. What is the max we can give?
- s. Consider total compensation package
 - i. Tuition reimbursement
 - ii. Professional development opportunities
 - iii. Profit sharing and retirement programs
 - iv. Health insurance
 - v. Work schedule/flex-time/vacation
 - vi. Car/cell phone allowance
- t. Key strategies in negotiating
 - i. Know what is negotiable
 - ii. Negotiate beyond the salary
 - iii. Don’t underestimate importance of likeability
 - iv. Understand person across the table
 - v. Actively listen
 - vi. Be patient
 - vii. You have to be ok with silence
- u. Things to never do while negotiating
 - i. Patronize the negotiator

- ii. Let your ego do the talking
- iii. Give ultimatums or get angry
- iv. Share information about financial needs
- v. Don't show lack of judgment – it reflects negatively back on you

3. Networking kind of allows you to skip the cover letter step

- a. On LinkedIn – go to USC page
 - i. On side menu, go to 'Alumni' page
 - ii. Search alumni by company, title, keyword, etc., and send chosen alumni a message (ask if they have time to talk about whatever it is you're interested in, etc.)
 - iii. To message people you aren't connected with, send a connection invitation and add a note to it
 - 1. LinkedIn premium isn't worth it.