Writing Samples

A writing sample can be a key piece in your job or graduate school application process. In some careers, such as journalism or publishing, it is a common expectation for writing samples to be part of the hiring procedures. However, it may come as a surprise to know that a wide variety of other professions are also using writing samples to screen potential candidates. Since writing is such an important part of daily work life in a variety of fields, strong writing skills are greatly valued by many interviewers. This document outlines key considerations for crafting the best possible writing sample; one that can be a strong asset to your job or graduate school search.

When creating your writing sample, keep in mind the following points:

- **Be relevant.** The topic of your writing sample is of utmost importance. Consider the audiences, as well as the field to which you are applying.

- **Past work may be appropriate.** It is not always necessary to create your sample from scratch. As long as it meets the requirements of your writing sample, it may be possible to use past essays from class, blog entries, case studies, published articles, etc. If using a past case study, be sure to get your supervisor’s permission, and block out client names or any other identifying information.

- **All writing must be error free.** Take your writing sample to the Career Center or the Writing Center for helpful critiques.

- **Do not be overly creative or controversial in your writing sample.** Now is not the time for a topic that can be construed as overly-biased, negative, or political in nature. Also do not make use of jokes, poems, excessive humor, etc. The best bet is to be conservative in your writing style and choice of topic.

- **Be brief.** Unless otherwise noted, your writing sample should be two to four pages long. A sample that is too-lengthy may actually hinder your chances of advancing in the hiring process.