1. Be Professional

**Yes:** “I believe that my work experience, education, and my passion for this practice area makes me a good candidate for this position.”

**No:** “I’d like to try litigation.”

2. Particularize Every Single Letter

**Yes:** “My experiences have solidified my interest in using civil litigation as a tool to address inequities in employment, health care, education, and access to resources. Because I know that Lieff Cabraser Heimann & Bernstein is a relatively small firm that has a big impact on these issues, I am seeking a position at the firm.”

**No:** “I am looking to use my legal skills and would like a position at your organization.”

3. Make It Perfect

- Grammar
- Spelling (including names!)
- Format

4. The Four Eyes Rule: Do Not Send a Letter Until Someone Else Has Reviewed It

Avoids this (real example provided by employer):

“I am applying to the X County Public Defender’s Office because I want to be a District Attorney.”

5. Show, Don’t Tell

**Yes:** “As a law clerk, I have been responsible for drafting opinions and orders in a wide variety of civil and criminal cases.”

**No:** “I have strong legal research and writing skills and understand litigation. I am also a good negotiator.”

6. State Your Accomplishments, But Do Not Embellish, Grandstand Or Brag

**Yes:** “At my internship, I helped clients resolve problems with their landlords or with government agencies. But more importantly, I learned how to effectively advocate for my clients.”

**No:** “In my 2.5 years at the firm, I have gained tremendous experience in all phases of civil litigation, in a cornucopia of practice areas.”

7. Convey Any Connection You Have to the Recipient, With Subtlety

- Alma mater
- Previous employer
- Common acquaintance with whom you have discussed your application, and who has given permission to be mentioned

8. Keep It Short

9. Highlight Relevant Experiences Not in Resume, and Highly Relevant Specific Skills from Resume

**Yes:** “Growing up working in a family-run bakery, I have managed a wide variety of responsibilities, including researching our employees’ rights to breaks and overtime pay.”

**No:** “I also played paintball at a professional level. From this I learned how to set goals and achieve them.”

10. This Is a Writing Sample

- Tone: Professional Correspondence
- Organization: Clear, Effective, Intentional
- Sentences: Readable, Concrete, Active
- Word Choice: Not Informal, But Avoid Jargon
- Punctuation: Avoid Exclamation Points and Use Colons/Semi-Colons Judiciously

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