Do you find you get stuck when writing to an employer or an alum when seeking their advice? In this video, we will walk through the most common types of professional correspondence and how to approach them.

To get started, you may ask why does it need to be different? Although we are very casual in our everyday correspondence, when writing to an employer or networking contact you are not reaching out to a friend. Instead, you are reaching out as a possible future work colleague, so your first impression should portray a professional demeanor. Let’s review four key tips:

Tip 1: Start on the Formal Side:
- Use “Dear Ms. Parker,” instead of “Hi Laura.”
- Avoid using “To Whom It May Concern.” If you do not have a name check the Employer Directory on the Yale Career Link or call the organization to try to get one.
- Sign your correspondence “Best Regards” or “Sincerely.” Avoid closing with overly casual phrases, such as “Cheers” or “Best.”
- Avoid slang and keep text abbreviations, including B/C or TYVM to messages with your friends.

Tip 2: Brevity is Your Ally
- The length will vary based on the type of correspondence, for example a cover letter where you are applying for a job will be longer than a short email asking a Yale alumna for time to talk about her career path.
- But in general, do not include EVERYTHING about yourself - that is the purpose of the meeting or interview. You should provide a few salient points and state why you are writing.
- Nothing will tune out a reader faster than pages and pages of information that come before they know why you are writing, which leads to the next tip.

Tip 3: Include a specific “Ask” in the first paragraph
- Who are you and why are you writing? Those are the two things you want to get across in any correspondence.
- Are you seeking advice, want to hear about their career path, or hoping to interview for a position?
- If you don’t include an ask up front, the reader won’t know how to help you.

Tip 4: Proofread! Remember this is your first impression and errors can be deal-breakers.

Next let’s quickly review some specific types of correspondence and you should visit the OCS website for examples of each:
- A Cover Letter is a formal letter you send with your resume when you apply for a position. If you send it by email, put your cover letter and resume into one PDF to avoid formatting problems.
- When you are ready to accept a job offer and confirm the terms of employment, you will write an Acceptance Letter.
- A Withdrawal Letter graciously informs an employer that you are withdrawing your application from further consideration.
- When you write a request for an Informational Interview/Networking Letter, you are attempting to expand your network and gain insight into a specific job function, industry, or company.
- Students often ask should I write a Thank You Letter - YES! This letter (or email) expresses appreciation to anyone who has helped you in your job search. In the case of a job interview, it is an opportunity to
reinforce your interest in the position, clarify something that you said during the interview, or highlight something that you didn’t mention.

Be sure to visit the Office of Career Strategy’s website for samples of these correspondence and more tips.