

Career Planning & Job Placement Services



Cover Letters & Employment Letters

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Cover Letters: Connecting Candidates & Employers

Purpose of this Booklet

This booklet explains how the cover letter can be developed. You will see various examples with different approaches. Be yourself, be creative. Research the organizations to which you will write. Writing the cover letter also is a good way to practice your writing skills. The way in which your letter is written tells a great deal about you and your potential partnership with an employer.

This booklet will also discuss the importance of *other* important letters related to your job search. Excerpts from this booklet were taken from The Job Hunting Handbook, Dahlstrom & Company, Inc., 2003. Other examples are those of JCC Students and Alumni.

Purpose of the Cover Letter

The purpose of the cover letter is to declare your interest in a particular position(s), and get you an interview. This letter is an important introduction to who you are, the reason you are writing, and further, to confirm that what you have to offer a prospective organization *parallels* with what the organization is seeking. The cover letter is the *partner* to your resume. No resume ever should be sent without one, unless you are explicitly told not to do so.

Your Cover Letter

- Serves as a business letter to direct your resume to the employer
- Highlights points on your resume
- Introduces you and your background to the employer
- Sells you to the employer, and convinces them to give you an interview
- Opens the door for your resume

Remember, the cover letter and the resume do not guarantee you a job, but they can help you secure an *interview*. Once you get that far, you can use your communication skills, your personality, and various other skills to further sell yourself. You won't get to the interview stage though, if you don't market yourself thoroughly and effectively through the cover letter.

Developing the Cover Letter

Before Drafting Your Cover Letter:

- Research the organization
- Learn the name and title of the hiring manager
- Have a clear understanding of the duties for the position

Four Things Your Cover Letter Must Do:

1. Express your interest in the position or company
2. Match your skills to the needs of the employer
3. Demonstrate your accomplishments and experience with concrete examples
4. Convince the employer to give you an interview

Organization of the Cover Letter

A cover letter is organized into three main sections: Opening, Main Body, & Closing

Opening

- Explain your objective or *intention* for writing the cover letter, it should be specific.
- When possible, it should state the *job title* and reiterate the *name of the organization*.
- Personalize the opening of the letter in a *creative* way, so the reader feels as if you are writing only to him or her at that particular organization.

Main Body

- Should give specific information about your character traits (personality), your education (level of degree, and/or coursework), your professional work experiences, and your skills.
- You do not need to write about every job you have ever held, nor every skill or experience that you have. Align these to the most central qualifications the employer is seeking.
- Prioritize the information for the reader to know about you as it relates to the job you want.
- One or two paragraphs should be enough. The cover letter should be about one page in length. Typically, two pages is too long.

Closing

- Should express a desire for future communication with the prospective employer.
- Provide a specific timeframe (seven to ten days from the date of the letter) which indicates when you will follow-up to inquire about your credentials, and the status of their job.
- Should provide a thank you to the reader for considering your credentials.
- Leave a phone number where you can be reached in the event the reader has questions or wants to set up an interview.
- Should refer the reader to your attached resume.

Building the Cover Letter

Do

- Use a one-page, standard business letter format.
Three-quarter to one inch margins on all sides, with a basic font of 10 or 12 point size.
- Use ivory, white, or gray paper printed in black ink.
- Use correct grammar and punctuation.
- Identify what the employer is asking for in a candidate, and directly relate your experience, education, and background to those needs.
- Customize your letter so the employer knows it isn't the same letter you sent to 50 other employers.
- Make sure your contact information on your cover letter matches that of your resume.
- Mention someone if they referred you to a position or company.
- Align all paragraphs to the left of the page. It is possible to indent the first line of each paragraph.
- Single space your letter.
- Try and answer the question that the employer will be asking while reading your letter, "Why should I hire this person?"

Don't

- Forget to enclose your resume.
- Include letters of recommendation.
- Misspell words.
- Email your documents as Word documents. All documents should be sent as a PDF, unless otherwise specified.
- Address the letter to "Dear Sir" or "To Whom It May Concern." Call the company and ask to whom your letter should be addressed. Use "Hiring Manager" or "Internship Coordinator" if necessary.
- Repeat your resume, summarize and entice, but do not restate.
- Forget to personally sign the letter.
- Be negative.
- Worry about writing the perfect cover letter—nobody has done it yet. But if you grab the reader's attention in 20 seconds, they'll turn the page to review your resume.

Cover Letter Layout

Your Name
Your address
City, State, Zip

Date

Contact Person
Title
Organization name
Organization address

Dear Contact Person:

Opening Paragraph

- State why you are writing, name the position or type of work for which you are applying and mention how you heard of the opening or organization.

Main Body

- Explain why you are interested in working for this employer and specify your interests for desiring the type of work.
- If you have relevant work experience or related education, be sure to point it out, but do not reiterate your entire resume.
- Emphasize skills or abilities you have that relate to the job for which you are applying.
- Be sure to do this in a confident manner, and remember that the reader will review your cover letter as an example of your writing skills.

Closing Paragraph

- You may refer the reader to your enclosed resume (which gives a summary of your qualifications) or whatever media you are using to illustrate your training, interests, and experience.
- Have an appropriate closing to pave the way for the interview by indicating the action steps you will take to initiate an interview date.
- Give a timeline or specific date which tells the reader when you will follow up to inquire about the status of your resume.
- Provide a contact phone number or email address for follow up.

Sincerely,

(Your signature in black ink)

Your name typed

Enclosure

Cover Letter Examples

Sample 1

1225 Hampton Boulevard
Norfolk, VA 23517
Today's Date

Ms. Dianne C. Strand
Manager of Human Resources
Atlantic Coast Industries, Inc.
2900 Virginia Beach Boulevard
Virginia Beach, VA 23464

Dear Ms. Strand:

I am applying for the position of systems analyst which was advertised on March 12 with the placement service at Old Dominion University. The position seems to fit very well with my education, experience, and interests.

Your position requires experience in computer systems, financial applications software, and end-use consulting. With a major in management information systems, I have training on mainframes, minicomputers, and microcomputers as well as with a variety of software programs and applications. My practical experience in my university's computer center as a programmer and as a student consultant for system use, gave me valuable exposure to complex computer operations. Additionally, I worked as a cooperative education student in computing operations for a large bank where I gained knowledge of financial systems. My enclosed resume provides more details on my qualifications.

My background and career goals seem to fit your job requirements well. I am confident that I can perform the job effectively. Furthermore, I am genuinely interested in the position and in working for Atlantic Coast Industries. Your firm has an excellent reputation and comes highly recommended to me.

Would you please consider my request for a personal interview to discuss further my qualifications and learn more about this opportunity? I shall call you next week to see if a meeting can be arranged. Should you need to reach me, please feel free to call me at 683-4388. If I am not in, please leave a message on my answering machine and I will return your call within a day.

Thank you for your consideration. I look forward to talking with you.

Sincerely, yours,
(Written signature)

Lisa Watson

Sample 2

4787 Yes Street
Yellowville, MD 20990
Today's Date

Ms. Judy Smithfield
Human Resource Department
Excel Productions, Inc.
3234 Noon Boulevard
Washington, DC 23343

Dear Ms. Smithfield:

I am responding to the Associate Manager Trainee employment announcement that I read in the *Washington Daily* newspaper on May 19.

Presently, I am completing an Associate of Arts degree in Business Management at Tosome City Community College. Through my studies, I have gained a broad knowledge of business, accounting, sales, and personnel relations. Also, I have very successfully worked in several part-time customer service positions. I believe my education and experience e make me highly qualified to assist your company in reaching its objectives now and in the future.

The enclosed resume will tell you more about my qualifications. I would like to meet with you to discuss how I can help meet your company's needs. I will contact your office in 10 days (May 30, 1993) to see if we can arrange an interview at your convenience. If you need to reach me before then, my home number is 301/555/4356.

I look forward to meeting with you.

Sincerely,

(Written signature)

Samuel U. Rightone

Enc.

Sample 3

184 Oakridge Drive
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma 06530
Today's Date

Mr. Fred Green
Associate Director of Marketing
Whitemore Department Stores
698 Capital Street
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma 06132

Dear Mr. Green:

I read with real interest your article on display in the November issue of the *Merchandising Journal*. Your description of how you used color and shape to guide the customer's eye was especially interesting. I became even more excited, however, when I saw the quality of research that had preceded the development of your design.

You are indeed fortunate to work for Whitemore's where research and creativity are encouraged. It is no accident that Whitemore Department Stores is a leader in this section of the country.

By reading your organization's annual report and articles like yours, I have seen a clear link between what you are doing in marketing and the work I see myself doing. As the enclosed resume shows, I have just completed a carefully planned course of study combining marketing and commercial art. I also have completed an interesting project on display organization that required a study of existing research plus a small amount of research in a local department store.

I would very much like to meet with you to discuss career opportunities with your organization. I will call your office early next week to see if we can arrange a meeting.

Sincerely,

(Written Signature)

Sterling Goodman

Enc.

Sample 4

Your Address
Today's Date

Mrs. Camie E. Baker
Executive Director
Jeff-Lewis Mediation Center, Inc.
500 Woolworth Building
Watertown, NY 13601

Dear Mrs. Baker:

I am writing you at the suggestion of Sarah Ford who feels that it might be to our advantage to discuss the position of assistant to the director which will soon be available. This position seems to fit very well with my education, experience, and career interests.

My recent internship at your agency has provided me with a fascinating look at the Jeff-Lewis Mediation Center, and the many ways it serves the community. The professionalism of the agency's staff and its success at meeting the community's needs are two qualities your agency possesses that interest me.

The opportunity of working at your agency has given me experience in performing the many duties for which the assistant to the director is responsible. I have taken an active role in learning about the agency and I have ambitiously gotten involved in various projects. My involvement in the CASA program is just one example of my determined desire to be involved in the agency.

My background as a supervisor in the restaurant industry, has given me experience in negotiating with a variety of people, and has provided me with extensive experience and problem-solving. Twelve years of supervisory experience with the same company has enabled me to empower employees to deal with a variety of issues both at work and on a personal level.

My proficiency as a successful communicator has also been demonstrated in other settings. While attending college I was asked to tutor students for an interpersonal communications course due to my understanding of the course material. I responded to this challenge by helping a student from Germany improve two letter grades in the course.

I would very much welcome being able to talk to you personally about the position of assistant to the director. I feel that a personal meeting would prove mutually beneficial. I shall call you next week to see if a meeting can be arranged. Should you need to reach me, please feel free to call me at 111-1111.

Thank you for your consideration. I look forward to talking with you.

Sincerely yours,

Sample 5

123 Meadow Lane
Watertown, NY 13601
Today's Date

Mr. Robert Pazamickas, CSW-ACSW
Case Management Supervisor
Sunmount DDSO-Jefferson County
State Office Building
Watertown, NY 13601

Dear Mr. Pazamickas,

I am writing in response to your ad for a case manager in the November 12 (Saturday) edition of the *Watertown Daily Times*. I would like to be considered for the available case management position. I believe that my educational and interpersonal relation experiences make me a very adequate candidate for this position.

My work as an intern with your organization has increased my interest in the Sunmount Organization. Presently, I am completing an Associate of Science degree in Human Services at Jefferson Community College. Through my studies I have acquired a broad knowledge of the aspects involved in the helping profession. In addition to my work as an intern, I have very successfully acquired many communication skills through a variety of part-time customer service jobs. I also have experience organizing and planning events.

I am realistic, energetic and very motivated. I enjoy challenges and work well under pressure. I believe I have the skills that are needed to work in this field. My background and career goals seem to match your job requirements well.

Would you please consider my request for a personal interview to discuss further qualifications and ways I can contribute to meeting your organizational needs. I will contact your office within ten days to see if we may arrange an interview at your convenience. I can be reached at home. My home number is (111) 111-1111. Please feel free to call anytime.

Thank you for your consideration. I look forward to meeting with you.

Warm Thanks,

Your Name

Sample 6

123 Meadow Lane
Black River, New York 13612
Today's Date

Mrs. Sharon Wuerschmidt
Senior Corrections Counselor
Watertown Correctional Facility
Dry Hill
Watertown, NY 13601

Dear Mrs. Wuerschmidt:

I am responding to Ad #701 in the *Watertown Daily Times* of November 14. I would like to apply for the position of ASAT Program Assistant. This position seems tailored to my education, experience and sincere interests.

Recently, I completed my Associate of Science degree in Human Services at Jefferson Community College. Through my studies, I have gained a significant understanding of the human services field. I have successfully completed two internships which have given me first hand experience in becoming a conscientious, ambitious human service worker.

I experienced one internship at your Watertown Correctional Facility. While at your facility, I encountered and learned about many different departments. I was fortunate to work in the business, personnel, guidance, and vocational offices. I was able to observe RET, ASAT, and CPI programs. I am confident that my education, and my internship with your facility will make me highly qualified for the SAT Program Assistant position. I enjoyed working my internship at your facility. The facility and the employees who helped train me have benefited me, and increased my learning experience.

Enclosed is my resume which reveals my qualifications for the position available. I would like to meet with you and discuss how I could further meet the needs of the position more specifically. I will contact your office in 10 days (November 27) to possibly arrange an interview at your convenience. My home number is 111-111-1111 if you need to reach me before then.

Thank you for your time in reviewing my resume, and I look forward to meeting with you.

Respectfully yours,

Your Name

Sample 7

Your Address
Today's Date

Mr. Steve Lyman
Commissioner
Jefferson County Department of Social Services
Watertown, New York 13601

Dear Mr. Lyman,

I am writing to inquire about the possibility of obtaining a provisional appointment as a Social Welfare Examiner with the Jefferson County Department of Social Services. I have enclosed my resume along with this letter in hopes that you will look favorably on this inquiry.

As you will note in my resume, I will receive my Associate of Science degree in Human Services this December. While completing my degree I completed two internships in county agencies, one with the Office of the Aging and one with the Department of Social Services. It was through doing these internships that I realized that government employment in a human services agency was how I wanted to use my degree.

I strongly believe that the skills and knowledge that I acquired during my internship could be parlayed into a position with your agency. I would be willing to take a provisional appointment with your agency and realize I would have to sit for a future exam. Would you be so kind to consider me for any vacancies you might have and let me know if I can become a part of your organization? I will call you within two weeks to inquire about the status of the search for Social Welfare Examiner position.

Very truly yours,

Your Name

Samples of Other Important Letters

Other letters, such as thank you letters, letters rejecting job offers, and letters accepting job offers can be as important as the cover letter. As with each letter you write, clearly establish your intention for writing (opening paragraph), define your message (main body), and properly close your letter (closing).

Thank you for Interview

Your Address

Inside Address

(If possible, use individual's name.)

Dear _____:

I appreciated the opportunity to talk with you on (date). The information you shared with me about (company name) was excellent, and I am excited about the possibility of applying my education and experience to the position we discussed.

If I can provide you with any additional information, please let me know. I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Sincerely,

(Written signature)

Your name typed

Thank you for Plant/Office Visit

Your address

(If possible, use individual's name.)

Dear _____:

Thank you for your letter of (date) suggesting a plant/office visit at (time) on the following dates:
(list dates).

The most convenient date for me would be (date). I will arrive at your office at (time).

Enclosed is a copy of my resume, along with the application for employment. (If necessary.)

I appreciate the opportunity to visit your office/plant. I am very interested and eager to learn more about possible employment opportunities with (organization name).

Sincerely,

Letter of Acceptance

Your Address

Inside Address

(If possible, use individual's name.)

Dear _____:

I am very pleased to accept your offer (state offer) as outlined in your letter of (date). (Include all details of offer-location, starting salary, starting date).

(Mention enclosures-application, resume, employee forms, or other information-and any related commentary.)

I look forward to meeting the challenges of the job and I shall make every attempt to fulfill your expectations.

Sincerely,

(Written signature)

Your name typed

Letter of Rejection

Your address

Inside Address

(If possible, use individual's name.)

Dear _____:

After considerable thought, I have decided not to accept your offer of employment as outlined in your (date) letter. This has been a very difficult decision for me. However, I feel I have made the correct one for this point in my career.

Thank you for your time, effort, and consideration. Your confidence in me is sincerely appreciated.

Sincerely,

(Written signature)

Your name typed

Sending Your Documents

Emailing Your Cover Letter & Resume

- STEP 1:** Save your resume and cover letter as PDF documents, unless otherwise specified by the job listing. Use your name as the file name, so the employer knows whose resume and cover letter it is. Examples: johnsmithresume; johnsmithcoverletter
- STEP 2:** Your email subject line should explain who are, and what job you're applying for. Do this first before writing your email so you do not forget.
Examples: Job Title-Your Name; Referred by First Name Last Name; ABC College Informational Interview Request; Social Media Expert Seeking New Opportunity.
- STEP 3:** Decide whether your cover letter will be placed directly in the body of your email, or if it will be attached. Attaching your cover letter as a separate document is the safer of the two options. Copying and pasting or retyping the cover letter may cause formatting errors, or may appear as less professional. Always follow the instructions of the job listing.

Do not send a blank email with your documents attached. You may choose to write a short statement such as the following:

Please accept the attached resume and cover letter as my application to the JOB TITLE with TITLE OF COMPANY. Please contact me at EMAIL ADDRESS or PHONE NUMBER if you need additional information or materials.

Sincerely,

YOUR NAME

- STEP 4:** Develop an email signature. This should include your full name, email address, phone number, so the Hiring Manager can at a glance contact you. Do not use your work email to send your resume and cover letter. Use an appropriate and professional sounding email address.
- STEP 5:** Attach all requested documents. Double check/open all attachments to ensure they are correct and accessible.
- STEP 6:** BCC yourself to have a copy for your own records.
- STEP 7:** Send your email!
- STEP 8:** Even if you applied electronically, you can follow up by mailing hard copies. This is a personal judgment call, but it could be well received by the employer, and demonstrate your interest in the position. You can even state in your cover letter you will be following up with hard copies of your resume or cover letter.

Mailing Your Cover Letter & Resume

- STEP 1:** Print your cover letter and resume on white, ivory, or light gray paper, 60 lb stock paper.
- STEP 2:** Complete a three-fold for a business letter and place in a business envelope, or mail flat in an 8X11 ½ envelope. Do not staple or paper clip your resume and cover letter together.
- STEP 3:** Properly address the envelope to the correct recipient. Otherwise, address to the appropriate department with a sticky note inside that says “Please forward to hiring manager for ____ position.”
- STEP 4:** Attach appropriate postage, and mail!

Hand-Delivering Your Cover Letter & Resume

- STEP 1:** Always follow the instructions of the employer when submitting your resume and cover letter. Dropping off your materials in person may not be a good idea, you have to use good judgment and “read” the company. You might have better luck with this approach at smaller organizations, than larger organizations.
- STEP 2:** Follow “Mailing your Resume & Cover Letter” steps, but do not attach postage or mail.
- STEP 3:** Dress in business casual attire.
- STEP 4:** Respect the employee’s time and privacy. Do not ask to see the hiring manager or make an appointment. Identify who you are, the job you’re interested in, and that you’re dropping of a copy (or extra copy) of your resume and cover letter. Say “Thank you.”

Final Note

PROOFREAD YOUR DOCUMENTS!

The number ONE reason applicants are denied interviews is because of spelling and grammar mistakes in their resumes and cover letters.

Career Planning & Job Placement Services is here to help you. You can *always* make an appointment or email your cover letter and resume to have it critiqued.