



PREPARING YOUR COVER LETTER

Cover Letter/Letter of Application

Whenever you mail a resume to a prospective employer, it should be accompanied with a cover letter or letter of application. The cover letter provides you an opportunity to personalize and focus your work experience, skill and background to the needs and challenges faced by an employer. The more effectively you can relate how you can meet the needs and the challenges of the employer, the greater the odds you will accomplish your objective in the cover letter: to obtain an interview.

When creating your draft of a cover letter, it would be very helpful for you to address the following questions. Through answering these questions, you will develop the content you will need to being writing your cover letter.

1. What is my reason for writing the cover letter? What kind of position am I seeking?
2. To whom am I writing? Am I using key words pertinent to the position I am seeking?
3. What do I have to offer this employer in terms of relevant experiences, personal qualities and skills or academic background related to this type of work?
4. Why am I interested in entering this type of work? What is it about this type of work that excites, stimulates or motivates me to pursue it?
5. Have I taken the correct follow-up steps in the closing paragraph of my cover letter? Did I take the initiative to call the prospective employer and set up a possible interview?

Each cover letter that you send should be unique since each situation that you respond to is distinctive. Do not use a generic cover letter that can be applied to all situations, because this can be readily detected by an employer. Whenever possible, address your cover letter to a specific person who is involved in the hiring process.

When applying for a specific job opening, indicate the position title and where or how you heard of the opening. If you read it in an advertisement, state the publication and the date, and if you were referred by someone, state his or her name and title.

Cover Letter Checklist

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| <input type="checkbox"/> If possible, is it addressed to a specific person? | <input type="checkbox"/> Did you remember to say thank you? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> In response to an ad, did you state the specific job title? | <input type="checkbox"/> Will your letter attract and hold the reader's attention? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Did you use specific examples to sell yourself? | <input type="checkbox"/> Are there too many "I's"? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Did you make references to your resume? | <input type="checkbox"/> Is the letter concise and error-free? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Are your top and bottom margins relatively equal? | <input type="checkbox"/> Did you sign the letter? |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Is the letter on bond paper that matches your resume? |

Other Types of Correspondence

As you seek meaningful work, you will have different opportunities to write employers about a range of issues. The following lists the more common types of letters you may be writing:

- Follow-up letter
- Thank-you letter
- Job acceptance letter
- Letter of refusal

Thank You Letters

Following an employment interview, you will want to send out within one to two days a thank you letter to the person(s) with whom you interviewed. If you are serious about this opportunity, a thank you letter is a must. In this letter, express your appreciation for the time the person spent interviewing you. In the second paragraph, state several reasons why you are a strong candidate for the opportunity.

Follow-up Letters

Whenever sending additional information or documents, including a transcript or writing sample to a prospective employer, always include a short typed note or letter to accompany this material. At times, this can be incorporated into a thank you letter if the timing is appropriate.

Job Acceptance Letter

Once you have accepted the professional position, write to your new employer to confirm in writing the verbal terms of your agreement. State specifics like salary and dates when you will start to ensure that you are both on the same wavelength. Also indicate that you look forward to beginning your work with them. Finally, send this acceptance letter via certified mail with return receipt to ensure that they receive this confirmation of accepting the position.

Letter of Refusal

If you decide to not accept a specific opportunity offered to you, be sure to put in writing your reasons for declining the offer. Thank the person for the offer and refuse graciously. Do not say anything negative about either the position or the organization since you may want to consider working there in the future.

Sample Cover Letter Format

Your address
City, State Zip
Date

Name
Title
Organization
Address
City, State Zip

Dear Name:

Paragraph 1: Indicate specifically what you are applying for and how you found out about the position. If you know of any personal contacts(s) within the company who assisted you in finding the position opening – and you have permission to use his/her name – this would be the paragraph to mention the individual(s).

Paragraph 2 and 3: Call attention to the specific qualifications that make you a strong candidate for this opportunity. This may be relevant work experience, skills, or other characteristics that would meet the needs and challenges the employer faces. Refer the reader to your resume. These are the key paragraphs, which can differentiate you from the next candidates.

Paragraph 4: Request a personal appointment to discuss the opportunity. Indicated when and how you are going to contact the person to discuss your status for this opportunity. Thank the reader for his or her time and consideration regarding your application.

Sincerely,

(your signature)

Your name typed

Sample Thank You Letter Format

Your address
City, State Zip
Date

Name
Title
Organization
Address
City, State Zip

Dear Name:

Express appreciation for the time the interviewer spent with you.

Articulate what you feel you can provide to prospective employer and why you have an interest in the opportunity.

Indicate that you look forward to hearing from them in the near future.

Sincerely,

(your signature)

Your name typed

The staff in the Office of Career Services welcomes the opportunity to meet with you and provide feedback on your cover letter, thank you letter or any other job search correspondence.