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# WRITING COVER AND OTHER IMPORTANT EMPLOYMENT LETTERS

# THE COVER LETTER

Somewhere inside of you, you probably have an idea of one particular job, or several prospective jobs that would be really good for you. To whoever would consider you for those jobs, wherever those jobs may be, that is where you need to send a letter of *interest*, or the “cover letter.”

The purpose of the cover letter is to declare your interest in a particular position(s). 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.

Maybe you saw an interesting job advertised in the newspaper and the name of someone to whom you should respond was publicized. In this case, the cover letter should be directed specifically to that person. On the other hand, perhaps you don't have a specific job in mind but you would like to send your resume to various organizations simply to inquire about future job openings. In this case, you still need to conduct some research and secure the name of a contact person to whom you can send your letter. Often, there is no way to know to whom you should send the letter. In that case, you still need to send a cover letter, but do not use the salutation, “To Whom This May Concern.” Try to personalize the letter by addressing it, “Dear Sir or Madam.”

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.

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.

# DEVELOPING THE COVER LETTER

Now that you know what the cover letter is, it should be written with three recognizable parts; the Opening, the Main Body, and the Closing.

The Opening explains your “Objective,” or your *intention* for writing the cover letter. Your objective should be specific. When possible, the objective would state the *job title* for which you are interested, and reiterate the *name of the organization* to which you are writing.

Personalize the opening of your letter in a *creative* way so the reader feels as though you are writing only to him or her at that particular organization. Remember that you don’t always know who will receive your cover letter (although if you conduct the appropriate research beforehand you’ll have a better idea of how to direct the letter). Your cover letter may be received first by a secretary, an office manager, or human resource (personnel) representative. It may be read first by the supervisor of the position you are seeking or by the CEO of the company. Regardless of who sees that letter first, its opening paragraph must “grab the attention” of the readers so they will read the entire letter with great interest and have the desire to read the accompanying resume.

The Main Body of your letter 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. You need to *prioritize* what is important for the reader to know about you as it relates to the job you want. This information can be described in one or more paragraphs. Most cover letters should be one page in length. Typically two pages are too long.

Above all, the information you provide in the cover letter should give the reader good reasons to interview you. You must sell yourself beyond all of the other candidates who applied for the same job.

The Closing of your letter should express a desire for future communication with the prospective employer. You should be proactive and provide a specific timeframe (typically seven to ten days from the date of your letter) which indicates when you will follow-up to inquire about your credentials, and the status of their job search. The closing should also thank the reader for considering your credentials. You can leave a phone number where you can be reached in the event that the reader has questions and/or would like to set up an interview. Your closing should also refer the reader directly to your attached *resume*. Writing the cover letter can help you write the resume. Some people devise their resumes first, then tailor the cover letter from there. Others write the cover letter first. Choose the approach that works best for you. For more information about devising or revising the resume, pick up one of our resume booklets! Good luck and happy writing.

# DON'T BLOW YOUR COVER!

## WHAT IT TAKES TO GET A LOOK BEYOND YOUR COVER LETTER

- **SHOW YOU CAN SPELL.**
  - \* Don't delude yourself that the job for which you're applying doesn't require you to spell. It does.
  - \* Misspelled words flash with neon intensity and they blind your other accomplishments.
  - \* Spelling errors, even "one," moves you to the rejection pile.
  
- **SHOW THAT YOUR WRITING COMMUNICATES.**
  - \* Don't sprinkle your cover letter with too many adverbs and adjectives.
  - \* To catch attention, quantify your accomplishments. Tell numbers, figures, percentages, and specific examples.
  - \* Write tightly and concisely, and keep your paragraphs short. Use appropriate use of boldface or italics.
  
- **SHOW THAT YOU HAVE THE BASIC REQUIREMENTS.**
  - \* Substantiate that you meet the requirements for the job. Don't say that you have two years of college, no employment history, but you can do the job because you're a "fast learner."
  - \* List core skills and your broader range of skills if they apply to the position.
  
- **SHOW YOUR RESEARCH SKILLS.**
  - \* Tie in what the employer is buying to what you're selling! Show what objectives you can help the employer accomplish. Focus on the employer's needs, not your own.
  - \* Customize your letter so the employer knows it isn't the same letter you sent to 50 other employers.
  - \* Investigate respective companies. The more you know about an organization, the more credible you become, and your cover letter will reflect your research.
  - \* Show how your resume and the employment opportunity came together...how? Examine the job advertisement and analyze how your skills, education, and experience match the position.

- **SHOW THE EMPLOYER A CLASS ACT.**
  - \* Understand the cover letter's importance. Use white, ivory, or gray paper printed with black ink.
  - \* Address the letter to one employer's correct name and title. Never assume that the reader is a "Dear Sir" or a "To Whom It May Concern." Call the company and ask to whom your letter should be addressed.
  
- **SHOW GOOD JUDGMENT.**
  - \* Be pro-active and follow up your cover letter and resume to inquire about its status in the search. Leave the appointment to interview to the employer's convenience, not yours.
  - \* When applying to a company with no advertised openings, request an informational interview.
  
- **SHOW ORIGINALITY.**
  - \* Entertain, impress and get to the point. Give the reader a reason to distinguish your letter from all the others.
  - \* Tell the employer if someone referred you for the position for which you are applying.
  
- **SHOW GOOD MANNERS.**
  - \* After your cover letter and resume have secured an interview, turn your attention to the next crucial piece of correspondence---send a thank you note!
  - \* Hand-written or typed, either thanks is okay. Present yourself as polite, eager, and industrious.
  - \* Don't worry about writing the perfect cover letter--nobody has done it yet. But if you can grab the reader's attention in 20 seconds, they'll turn the page to review your resume.

*Excerpts from Sharon E. Barnes, Director of Employee Relations at Texas Christian University in Fort Worth. (EEO Career Bound).*

## GENERAL OUTLINE FOR A COVER LETTER

Use complete title and address	Employer's Name and Title And Address
If possible, address it to a particular person by name.	<i>Salutation:</i> Dear Sir or Madam, Ladies and Gentlemen, or Members of the Search Committee. Never use "To Whom It May Concern."
Make the addressee want to read your resume. Be personable and be enthusiastic.	<i>Opening Paragraph:</i> 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.
Be brief and specific; your resume contains details	<i>The Body/Middle Paragraphs:</i> Explain why you are interested in working for this employer and specify your interests for desiring this 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.
Top and bottom margins should be equal	<i>Closing Paragraph:</i> You may refer to 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 or 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.
Always sign letters	Sincerely,
If a resume or other enclosure is used, not in letter	Your name typed
Your Address Phone Number Date of Letter	enclosure

**COVER LETTER EXAMPLES**  
**SAMPLE 1: COVER LETTER (FULL BLOCK FORMAT)**

Your Address  
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 XXX-XXXX. 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

Your Address  
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 to see if we can arrange an interview at your convenience. If you need to reach me before then, my home number is XXX/XXX/XXXX.

I look forward to meeting with you.

Sincerely,

(Written signature)

Samuel U. Rightone

Enc.

## SAMPLE 3

Your Address  
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

Your Address  
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

Your Address  
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