

WRITING A COVER LETTER

Shepherd University
Career Development Center
Gardiner Hall – Ground Floor
304-876-5122
www.shepherd.edu/jobweb



Cover Letter Outline

Your **cover letter** is often your first introduction to a prospective employer. An effective **cover letter** will provide an introduction, explain the purpose of writing (to apply for a job or internship), and create interest to generate an interview.

The letter should demonstrate your written communication skills, outline how your skills, education and experience match the employer's needs, and express your interest and enthusiasm for the position.

Your Cover Letter Should Be...

1. CONSISTENT WITH RESUME

- Font size, type, and letter layout should match your resume
- 10-12 point font size
- Standard fonts (Arial, Times New Roman)
- Adequate Margins– Top/Bottom, Left/Right (1/2"-1")
- Printed on quality resume paper
- When sending electronically (email) type letter into the text area of the email and attach your resume to the email (preferably Word Doc or PDF)

2. EASY TO READ

- Well-organized
- No typos
- Simple block format with left flush margins
- One page– 3-4 paragraphs

3. RELEVANT TO EMPLOYER NEED

- Addressed to a specific individual
- Differentiate yourself from other candidates
- Be concise and highlight what is most important
- Unique and customized for each specific position

WHEN RESPONDING TO A JOB ANNOUNCEMENT...

- Read the announcement carefully
- Pay close attention to the job description and focus on those duties in your cover letter. Match your qualifications with what they want.
- Follow instructions carefully. If the announcement requires 3 letters of recommendation, send 3 letters. If the announcement states "No Phone Calls", do not call.

AVOID...

- Irrelevant details
- Starting every sentence with "I" or "my"
- Flowery phrases that say nothing
- Unnecessary personal information
- Abbreviations or acronyms unfamiliar to the employer
- Copying and pasting the same letter for each position

Model Cover Letter

Your Present Address
City, State, Zip

Date

Name of Contact Person
Title
Organization/Company
Street Address
City, State, Zip

Dear (contact person) [Be formal: Dr./Mr./Ms./Mrs.] *if not certain if married female, put Ms.

Opening Paragraph: (should address interest and define career objective)

- Create an opening sentence that will make the reader want to continue reading.
- State the job for which you are applying. Explain how you learned about the position.
- Mention the name of the person and what relation they are to the company (if any), who referred you to the organization and vacancy – preferably a colleague of the contact person.

2nd Paragraph (should develop your career objective and identify what you have that they want – your resume should provide facts to support this)

- Mention one or two qualifications you think would be of greatest interest to the employer – Use keywords related to the position/industry.
- Tell why you are interested in the company, location, or type of work.
- Indicate any related experience, educational background, or specialized training that might increase your employability.

3rd Paragraph (should highlight specific experience) Make a positive statement of your skills/abilities!

- Give examples of skills/strengths you will bring to the position.
- List accomplishments and achievements and how they will transfer to the job.
- Indicate your willingness to relocate if applicable.
- Refer the reader to the enclosed qualifications in your resume.

4th Paragraph (should request an interview) Be positive in your attitude!

- Close by making a specific request for an interview: give an approximate time in which you will follow up with the company to further discuss employment opportunities.
- Refer to enclosed documents (resume, references list, writing samples, etc.).
- Make it easy for the person to contact you. List telephone numbers and days/times when you can be reached. Also list an email address. (Even though this information is on your resume, state it here).

Sincerely,

(Handwritten signature)

Type your name

Enclosure: Resume

Sam D. Student

3210 King Street | Shepherdstown WV 25443 | 304-876-1234 | *s.d.student@yahoo.com*

January 12, 2009

Mr. Arthur Smith
Manager, Human Resources
Telemarketing Corporation
12123 West Market Street
Alexandria, VA 22302

Dear Mr. Smith:

I am applying for the position of Customer Service Manager, as advertised in the January 11 issue of the Washington Post. With over three years experience in customer service and a strong educational background in human resources management, I believe I could make a significant contribution in helping Telemarketing Corporation achieve its customer service goals and objectives.

As an example of my most recent accomplishments, I recently worked on a team that designed and implemented an incentive program that significantly increased productivity among customer service employees which, in turn, significantly raised the level of customer satisfaction with the service provided. Because employee productivity and customer satisfaction are key components of a successful customer service operation, I believe that my expertise in these areas would be of particular value in meeting the challenges of this position.

The enclosed resume summarizes the full range of my skills and qualifications. I would appreciate the opportunity for a personal interview to discuss this position and my qualifications in more detail and look forward to hearing from you at your earliest convenience. I can be reached via phone, (304) 267-1234.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Sam D. Student

Enclosure

SAMPLE COVER LETTER VIA EMAIL

April 16, 2008

Mr. William Jackson
Employment Manager
Acme Pharmaceutical Corporation
13764 Jefferson Parkway
Roanoke, VA 24019
jackson@acmepharmaceutical.com

Dear Mr. Jackson:

From your company's web site I learned about your need for a sales representative for the Virginia, Maryland, and North Carolina areas. I am very interested in this position with Acme Pharmaceuticals, and believe that my education and employment background are appropriate for the position.

While working toward my master's degree, I was employed as a sales representative with a small dairy foods firm. I increased my sales volume and profit margin appreciably while at Farmer's Foods, and I would like to repeat that success in the pharmaceutical industry. I have a strong academic background in biology and marketing, and think that I could apply my combination of knowledge and experience to the health industry. I will complete my master's degree in marketing in mid-May and will be available to begin employment early-June.

Attached is a copy of my resume, which more fully details my qualifications for the position.

I look forward to talking with you regarding sales opportunities with Acme Pharmaceuticals. Within the next week I will contact you to confirm that you received my email and resume and to answer any questions you may have.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,
Lynn A. Johnson
5542 Hunt Club Lane, #1
Blacksburg, VA 24060
(540) 555-8082
lajohnson@vt.edu

Resume attached as PDF