



**Create a Bright Future with
*Career Services & Internships***

The Cover Letter

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THE COVER LETTER

Writing a cover letter often seems like a particularly daunting task. However, if you take it ONE STEP at a time, you'll soon be an expert at writing letters to send with your resume.

A cover letter typically accompanies each resume you send out. Your cover letter may make the difference between obtaining a job interview and having your resume ignored, so, it makes good sense to devote the necessary TIME AND EFFORT to writing effective cover letters.

A cover letter should COMPLEMENT, not duplicate your resume. Its purpose is to interpret the data-oriented, factual resume and add a personal touch.

A cover letter is often your earliest written contact with a potential employer, creating a critical first impression.

There are three general types of cover letters:

- **APPLICATION LETTER** -- which responds to a known job opening.
- **PROSPECTING LETTER** -- which inquires about possible positions.
- **NETWORKING LETTER** -- which requests information and assistance in your job search.

Your cover letter should be designed specifically for each purpose outlined above as well as for each position you seek.

Always include a cover letter when you mail, email or fax your resume to a prospective employer.

Before You Write—PREPARE!

Before you can apply for a specific position you need to do some background work. Ask yourself why am I interested in applying for this position? Do your skills, abilities and interests fit with the job and the company? What do you know about the company or organization? How do you find the answer to these questions - by doing research and self-assessment.

First, identify your skills, interests and abilities. This

can be accomplished in many ways including using the resources available in *Career Services & Internships* (for example: taking the Strong Interest Assessment with a career counselor).

Then, you need to research the company. Most companies have their own websites that will provide you with a great deal of information about the work they do, the company's values, the company history, etc.. The Career Center Library also has books, brochures and information on a variety of companies and opportunities. Another good place to learn more about companies is from newspapers and magazines. Check out The L.A. Times, The Wall Street Journal, Fortune magazine, Business Week, etc. for current information about companies, employment trends and internship or training programs.

Attending our Job & Internship Fair (and other local job fairs/networking events) is another way to make connections and research companies. Talk to representatives about their organization, gather facts and information, and pick up brochures.

Finally, talk to people; friends, family, alumnae, anyone who can give you "inside" information about an organization or field. Let people know you are job searching (and what field, company and position you desire!)

Carefully read the job description to determine if your skills and abilities will meet the needs of the employer. Do your interests and values match theirs?

Once you have gathered all the facts, you are ready to write a cover letter.

Effective Cover Letter:

- Effective cover letters explain the reasons for your interest in the specific organizations and identify your most relevant skills or experiences (remember, relevance is determined by the employer's self-interest). They should express a high level of interest and knowledge about the position.

REMEMBER: PROOFREAD! PROOFREAD! PROOFREAD! Feel free to have your cover letter reviewed by a career counselor before sending to an employer.

COVER LETTER FORMAT

Name
Address
City, State, Zip, Code
Phone Number
Email Address

Date

Employer Contact Information (if you have it)

Name
Title
Organization/Company Name
Address
City, State and Zip Code

Salutation

Dear Mr./Ms. Last Name, (leave out if you don't have a contact)

Body of Cover Letter

The body of your cover letter lets the employer know what position you are applying for, why the employer should select you for an interview, and how you will follow-up.

First Paragraph

The first paragraph of your letter should include information on why you are writing. Mention the position you are applying for and where you found the job listing. Include the name of a mutual contact, if you have one.

Middle Paragraph(s)

The next section of your cover letter should describe what you have to offer the employer. Mention specifically how your qualifications match the job you are applying for. Remember, you are interpreting your resume, not repeating it.

Final Paragraph

Conclude your cover letter by thanking the employer for considering you for the position. Include information on how you will follow-up.

Complimentary Close,

Respectfully yours,

Signature (handwritten signature for mailed letter)

COVER LETTER TIPS

Perfection matters when writing cover letters. Every cover letter you write should be customized for the job you are applying for, clear and concise, grammatically correct, and error-free.

Here are cover letter tips and suggestions for writing cover letters:

Send a customized cover letter with each resume you send out. Your cover letter may make the difference between obtaining a job interview and having your resume ignored. Even if an employer doesn't request a cover letter, it's helpful to send one.

Target your cover letter. Take the job posting and list the criteria the employer is looking for. Then list the skills and experience you have. Either address how your skills match the job in paragraph form or list the criteria and your qualifications.

Don't rehash your resume. Your cover letter should complement, not duplicate your resume. Expand on your resume and highlight your background as it relates to the job.

Write simply and clearly. Get right to the point and write short, targeted letters. Each letter should be one page, or less. Each paragraph should contain three or four sentences, at most.

Personalize your letter. If you can, address it to the individual responsible for hiring. If need be, research online or make a phone call to find out who the hiring manager is.

Spell check and proofread. Then ask someone else to read your correspondence before you send it. It's often easy not to notice mistakes in our own writing.

Write simply and clearly. Get right to the point and write short, targeted letters. Each letter should be one page, or less. Each paragraph should contain three or four sentences, at most.

Keep copies of all your cover letters, so you know what you sent to whom.

COVER LETTER CHECKLIST

Before you send your cover letter, review this checklist to make sure that you have covered all the basics and are sending a perfect cover letter to your prospective employer.

- The contact name and company name are correct.
- The letter is addressed to an individual, if possible.
- Letter mentions the position you are applying for and where it was listed.
- Your personal information (name, address, home phone, cell phone, email) is all included and correct.
- If you have a contact at the company, you have mentioned him or her in the first paragraph.
- Letter is focused, concise, clear, and well organized.
- If you have a gap in your employment history you have explained it in your cover letter.
- Font is 10 or 12 points and easy to read (Times New Roman or Arial, for example).
- There are no spelling, grammatical or typographical errors.
- You have read the cover letter out loud to make sure there are no missing words.
- Cover Letter is printed on good quality bond paper that matches your resume.
- Cover Letter is printed on good quality bond paper that matches your resume.
- Letter is signed if you are mailing it.
- Resume and letter are mailed flat in a business envelope (first choice) or neatly folded into thirds with the resume on top of the letter.

CUSTOMIZED COVER LETTER EXAMPLE

Your Contact Information

Address

City, State, Zip Code

Phone Number /Cell Phone Number

Email

Employer Contact Information

Name

Title

Company

Address

City, State, Zip Code

Date

Dear Mr./Ms. LastName

I am applying for the Inside Sales position posted on Boston.Monster.com. At your convenience, I'd appreciate the opportunity to discuss the position and my candidacy with you. You can find my resume attached to this e-mail.

I am looking to bring my well-honed public relations, marketing, and client-focused online, oral, and interpersonal communication skills internally to succeed in an inside sales position.

Pertinent experience and skills for the posted position include:

*The ability to reach key audiences. As a journalist, I published stories in key print and online media, including CareerJournal.com, CollegeJournal.com and StartupJournal.com (online publications of The Wall Street Journal), Consumers Digest, Woman's Day, and ePregnancy Magazine. As a copywriter, my work has been used in e-mail marketing, online and offline advertisements, blogs, brochures, taglines, and Web sites.

*Strong financial aptitude (My experience includes a little over a decade in the accounting profession in external and internal client-facing environments.)

*B.S. in Accounting from Southern New Hampshire University, with a Minor in Management Information Systems.

*Relevant computer skills (Microsoft products, HTML, etc.).

*Good listener...Solid work ethic...Desire to excel...Meet deadlines...Enjoy a fast-paced environment...Extraordinary factual recall...

I'd love to find out more about the position you're looking to fill, and I would welcome the opportunity to tell you how my skills and ideas can benefit Wellesley Information Services. I can be reached at (5555) 555-5555 or name@gmail.com.

Thanks for your consideration; I look forward to hearing from you soon!

Sincerely,

Your Signature

Typed First Name Last Name

STUDENT CAREER NETWORKING LETTER

Sample networking letters are used to set up an informational interview or to obtain career assistance from a college or university contact.

Sample Job Search Networking Letter:

Your FIRST and LAST name

Address

City, State, Zip

Date

Contact Name

Title

Company

Address

City, State, Zip

Dear Ms./Mr. Contact,

I am a junior at Sample College, and found your name and contact information on our Alumni Career Network. I am hoping that you will be able to help me learn more about options in law. I have been encouraged to consider the field by family and professors, alike, and would like to determine if it would be a good match for me.

I am interested in hearing about how and why you entered the field, the pros and cons of working in law, classes and co-curricular activities I should consider if I were to decide to move in this direction, and your advice on how I might test the waters, experientially, over the next few summers.

I appreciate your willingness to advise me, and look forward to contacting you to set up an informational interview.

Sincerely,

Your Singature

Your FIRST and LAST name 'XX Class Year (Typed)

JOB APPLICATION LETTER

Job Application Forms:

In many cases, even if you submit a resume, you will also be asked to complete a [job application](#). This way the employer will have consistent data on file for all prospective applicants. Also, your signature on the job application acknowledges that the information is accurate.

Job Application Rules:

The most important rule to remember when applying for jobs is to **follow the directions**. If the employer tells you to apply in person, don't call. If the job posting says to mail your resume, do not send it via email. When the job listing says apply via a form on the company web site, don't email your application directly to Human Resources.

Sample Job Application Letter:

Mr. George Gilhooley
XYZ Company
87 Delaware Road
Hatfield, CA 08065
(909) 555-5555

Date

Dear Mr. Gilhooley,

I am writing to apply for the programmer position advertised in the *Times Union*. As requested, I am enclosing a completed job application, my certification, my resume and three references.

The opportunity presented in this listing is very interesting, and I believe that my strong technical experience and education will make me a very competitive candidate for this position. The key strengths that I possess for success in this position include:

- I have successfully designed, developed, and supported live use applications.
- I strive for continued excellence.
- I provide exceptional contributions to customer service for all customers.

With a BS degree in Computer Programming, I have a full understanding of the full life cycle of a software development project. I also have experience in learning and excelling at new technologies as needed.

Please see my resume for additional information on my experience.

I can be reached anytime via my cell phone, 555-555-5555. Thank you for your time and consideration. I look forward to speaking with you about this employment opportunity.

Sincerely,

Your Signature

Your First Name Last Name (Typed)

Sample Letter of Application:

Your Name
Your Address
Your City, State, Zip Code
Your Phone Number
Your Email

Contact Name
Title
Company Name
Address
City, State, Zip Code

Dear Contact Person:

I'm writing to express my interest in the Web Content Specialist position listed on Monster.com. I have experience building large, consumer-focused health-based content sites. While much of my experience has been in the business world, I understand the social value of the non-profit sector and my business experience will be an asset to your organization.

My responsibilities included the development and management of the site's editorial voice and style, the editorial calendar, and the daily content programming and production of the web site. I worked closely with health care professionals and medical editors to help them provide the best possible information to a consumer audience of patients. In addition, I helped physicians learn to utilize their medical content to write user-friendly, readily comprehensible text.

Experience has taught me how to build strong relationships with all departments at an organization. I have the ability to work within a team as well as cross-team. I can work with web engineers to resolve technical issues and implement technical enhancements, work with the development department to implement design and functional enhancements, and monitor site statistics and conduct search engine optimization.

Thank you for your consideration.

Your Signature

Your First Name Last Name (Typed)

Direct Marketing/Unadvertised Openings

Sample Letter:

Your Name
Your Address
Your City, State, Zip Code
Your Phone Number
Your Email

Date

Dear Mr./Ms. Contact,

As an Information Technology professional with high-level management experience in the IT industry, I learned that the best way to achieve success was to motivate the resources I had with well-defined objectives and empowerment. A management belief based on integrity, quality, and service, along with a positive attitude, an aptitude for strategic thought and planning, and the ability to adapt quickly to new ideas and situations allows me to achieve consistent and significant successes in multiple industries.

My personality profile says:

- A confident, driving individual who reacts quickly to change.
- A self-starter with a strong sense of urgency who responds positively to challenge and pressure.
- A fast learner who is a practical and ingenious problem solver.
- A fluent and articulate communicator, flexible and responsive. A self directed, goal oriented doer.

My former managers' say:

"...The Information Technology Analysis will serve as a guideline for making positive contributions ...your management style provided a footprint for younger members of our organization... a very positive impression of the contributions you made to our business and its growth." Gregory Hines, President and CEO, Information Data Technology.

"...the most important source of growth in our data technology business ...able to focus the team and manage the product to a successful introduction ...due in large part to his own personal commitment ...excellent IT project management and operational management skills." Pauline Hallenback, CTO at Information Systems.

"...your strengths as a manager are many and varied ...all issues are confronted in a timely manner ... management by objectives comes as a second nature to you..." Jackson Brownell, Director of Operations, Denver Technologies.

ABC Company is a company that would provide me with the opportunity to put my personality, skills and successes to work. At a personal meeting I would like to discuss with you how I will contribute to the continued growth of your company.

Best Regards,

Signature

Your First Name Last Name (Typed)

Letter of Interest/Prospecting Letter

Sample:

Your Name
Your Address
Your City, State, Zip Code
Your Phone Number
Your Email

Date
Name
Job Title
Company
Street
City, State Zip

Dear Mr./Ms. Last Name,

I read about Company X's retail management training program in *College Graduate Magazine* and I would like to inquire about the possibility of openings. I am interested in a career in retail management and am planning to relocate to the New York City area in the near future. I would be interested in learning more about the company and about available opportunities.

I have a Bachelor of Science degree in Management and Business, as well as retail experience as a Sales Associate and Key Holder. In addition, I completed two internships focusing on retail management.

My resume, which is enclosed, contains additional information on my experience and skills. I would appreciate the opportunity to discuss the training program with you and to provide further information on my candidacy. I can be reached anytime via my cell phone, 555-555-5555.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I look forward to speaking with you about this exciting opportunity.

Sincerely,

Your Signature

Your First Name Last Name (Typed)