

Cover Letters

The purpose of a cover letter (A.K.A. letter of application/letter of inquiry) is to introduce yourself to a prospective employer, bring attention to your enclosed resume and create a desire in the employer to have an interview with you. A cover letter is **NOT** used when you are making a personal face-to-face contact with an employer. Cover letters are not necessary for on-campus interviews, job fairs, or when arrangements for an interview have been already made. Cover letters are usually sent to discover job openings (letters of inquiry), initiate contacts, respond to an advertised vacancy bulletin (letters of application), or follow-up on a referral by a personal contact.

Some cover letter basics: Cover letters are brief (3 to 4 paragraphs) and should not exceed one page. As a general rule, try to keep your paragraphs to 3 or 4 sentences, maximum. Always type and personalize your letters. If using a computer, be sure to use a letter quality printer. Use quality stationery, at least 20 pound bond paper, no larger than 8 ½ x 11 inches – not computer paper. Preferably, use the same type of paper used to print your resume. BE CERTAIN that your cover letter is free from spelling and grammatical errors. Professional counselors in Career Services are available to review the content of your cover letter, as well as to examine it for spelling and grammatical errors.

Opening sentence suggestions for full time jobs:

- Recently, I have been researching the “_____” industry. My search has been for companies that are respected in the field and that provide ongoing training programs. The name _____ keeps coming up as a top company.
- The state of the art in _____ changes so rapidly that it is tough for many professionals to keep up. I am the exception. I am eager to make my experience available to your company.
- Eastern Illinois University’s department chairperson for (name of department), (name of chairperson), has suggested that I contact you regarding the availability of (job title) openings. Graduating with extensive training in this field, I am most eager to discuss future employment opportunities with (name of company or school).
- I would like an opportunity to put my (# of) years of experience to work for (company).
- Within the next few weeks, I will be moving from Chicago to St. Louis. Having researched the St. Louis companies/schools in my field, I know that you are the people I want to talk to.
- Jim Gold, your office manager and my neighbor, suggested I contact you about the upcoming opening in your accounting department.
- I read with interest your vacancy notice published on the Eastern Illinois University’s Career Services’ website. I have the qualification you can use.
- Your advertisement in the Chicago Tribune on Sunday, October 8, 2001 for a (job title) caught my attention. My educational background and experiences match the requirements you are seeking.

Cover Letter Do's and Don'ts

- Don't ever send your resume without a cover letter.
- Do address your letter to a specific individual.
- Do keep letter to one page.
- Don't waste your first paragraph by writing a boring introduction. Use the first paragraph to grab the employer's attention; give the employer the reasons you are qualified for the position.
- Do tailor your cover letter for each situation. Generic letters are ineffective.
- Don't depend on the employer to take action. Request action. Request an interview, and tell the employer when you will follow up to arrange it. Then, DO SO. It is imperative that you follow up. You will greatly increase your chances of getting interviews if you call the employer after writing instead of sitting back and waiting for a call.
- Don't send a cover letter that contains any typo's, misspellings, incorrect grammar or punctuation.
- Do address the requirements of the job, especially when responding to an ad and explain how you can fulfill them.
- Do tell the employer how you can meet his or her needs and contribute to the company.
- Do try to answer the question that the employer will be asking while reading your letter: "Why should I hire this person?"
- Don't rehash your resume. Use your cover letter to highlight the aspects of your resume that are relevant to the position, but you're wasting precious space – and the potential employer's time – if you simply repeat your resume.
- Do be sure the potential employer can reach you.
- Don't forget to personally sign the letter.

RESUME

What is the "correct" resume format to use?

It is important to understand one point: "There is no one right way to construct a resume." There are hundreds of styles to choose from. You need to select the style that best matches you. You are the only person who will be representing the information presented in your resume.

The lifespan of a resume is approximately 30-35 seconds. Therefore, keep these tips in mind when writing your resume:

- Keep it in a concise, easy-to-read format
- Use phrases and incomplete sentences for work experience descriptions.
- Limit the use of "I".
- Start each sentence or phrase with action verbs whenever possible
- Try to keep your resume to one page, or if you have extensive experience a 2 page resume is acceptable.

- Be focused, employers need to know what you want.
- Give it a professional appearance – use resume quality paper, light colors are best.
- Use 1” margins for both sides, top, and bottom of the page.

These are some general formats to use when writing a resume.

- **Chronological Resume** – Most effective if your work history or educational experience relate to the job you are seeking. This is the most widely used and accepted format. A chronological resume emphasizes dates of employment. The information presented is outlined in reverse chronological order with the most recent job and degrees appearing first.
- **Functional Resume** – Most effective if your skills are your best qualifications for the position you are seeking. A functional resume allows you to group your experience in skill categories that emphasize your strengths. Job title and employment chronologies are minimized. This format provides greater flexibility in representing skills gained through personal experience, but should include significant examples of these professional skills.
- **Technical Resume** – Technical resumes are similar in many ways to standard business resumes. The main difference is that a profile of technical skills is almost always included. In a technical resume, you will put less emphasis on education or experience that is not directly related to the technical skills you are presenting. In short, a technical resume is even more focused than a typical business resume. Technical recruiter and human resource professionals look for several things in evaluating resumes, such as: qualifying technical skills, evidence of intelligence, neatness, and consistency.

What information can be included in a resume?

Again, it is your decision as to what information sections you choose to include in your resume, as well as what heading you wish to use to name each section. Information sections that are commonly used in a resume are discussed below. The placement of your information section should be in an order of priority according to what you want the employer to read first.

The Heading

- Name, Address (local/permanent), Telephone Number, E-mail Address

This is usually the first piece of information an employer sees. Give your full name, do not abbreviate – use ALL CAPS and **BOLD** to make it stand out. You can also include your cell phone number.

The Career Objective

- Conveys career goals

Most employers recommend the use of a Career Objective section in the resume, which communicates your career goal or job objective. If you are willing to relocate, include the phrase "Willing to Relocate" at the end of your Career Objective statement.

Objective Examples:

- Interested in joining the staff of a (company/agency/school district) which will benefit from my analytical, organizational, and communication skills.
- Seeking a (job title) position which offers advancement opportunities in the field of ____.
- To firmly establish myself in a challenging position with a growth-oriented company that will ultimately lead to a position in the field. Willing to Relocate.
- To obtain a position in the department of a dynamic firm that will utilize my creative talents and provide the opportunity for personal growth and professional advancement.
- A challenging opportunity in the areas of Fundraising, Customer Service, or Sales.
- Professional sales. Willing to travel.
- A challenging position and active involvement in a progressive organization offering the opportunity to fully utilize proven and developing people oriented skills in the area of ____.
- Entry-level position in publishing in any of the following areas: promotions, advertising, design, and editing.
- Opportunity to use organizational and communication skills and scientific background in the health-care industry.
- A position in data analysis where skills in mathematics, computer programming and deductive reasoning will contribute to new systems development.
- A position as a General Sales Representative with a pharmaceutical house which will use chemistry background and ability to work on a self-directed basis in managing a market territory. Willing to travel and relocate.

Education

- Degree, Institution, Dates of Attendance, Major, GPA, Minor/Concentration

Start with your most recent or anticipated degree to be completed and go back in time. DO NOT list your high school. Dates of attendance, school names, locations, dates of graduation or anticipated graduation date, degree major, minor and, if applicable, areas of concentration. Regarding your GPA, many employers like to have this in the resume. It is, however, optional. If you do include your GPA, it should be written as follows: Cumulative or Major BPA 3.12 (4.0). If you are paying for your education, with little financial support from parents, then you should indicate this by writing: Financed 90 percent of my educational (or college) expenses.

Work Experience

- Position Title, Name of Employer, Location, Dates of Employment, Description of Work Responsibilities

This section is of great importance. Use reverse chronological order when listing your work experiences. Include part-time, summer, volunteer work, military experience, student teaching, and graduate assistant positions. All work experience held for a minimum of three months should be included in your resume. If you have several years of work experience, the rule of thumb is to list those positions held during the last 10-15 years. This is a judgment call you will need to make as you market yourself to an employer. Under each work experience listing, identify job title, name of employer, employer's city and state. Also, list the dates employed and the responsibilities of each position using action verbs. Be sure to highlight accomplishments as well as responsibilities. Generally, pre-collegiate work experience is not included unless it is highly relevant or was continued through the college years.

Related Information

This can be any information you deem relevant to the position you are seeking. It can include areas such as:

- Honors, Awards
 - Extra-Curricular Activities
 - Volunteer Experience
 - Technical Skills
 - Memberships
 - Publications
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References

Indicating that references are available upon request at the bottom of the resume is no longer necessary for non-education job candidates. Typically, a separate page of references, which lists names, titles, addresses and phone numbers of 3-5 references, is made available to employers when requested. This reference page is printed on your resume paper and is sent to employers upon their request.

JANE DOE

xxxx@eiu.edu

PERMANENT ADDRESS

111 Clinton Street
Champaign, Illinois 61821
(217) 351-0000

LOCAL ADDRESS

000 Lawson Hall
Charleston, Illinois 61920
(217) 581-0000

EDUCATION

Eastern Illinois University, Charleston, Illinois

May 2006 Master of Science in Educational Administration
Certificate Type: Type 75
Overall GPA: 4.0/4.0

Eastern Illinois University, Charleston, Illinois

May 2003 Bachelor of Science in Education
Major: Elementary Education
Concentration: Foreign Language, Spanish
Minor: Mathematics
Certificate Type: Type 03 (Grades K-9)
Overall GPA: 3.5/4.0 Major GPA: **3.8/4.0**

ADMINISTRATIVE EXPERIENCE

Fall 2005 – Present Jefferson Elementary School, Charleston, Illinois

Administrative Practicum

- Developed registration materials and assisted with registration
- Organized and conducted an orientation session for new teachers
- Developed master schedule for fine arts, physical education, and music
- Evaluated three teachers
- Created a substitute handbook
- Presented an in-service for faculty and staff: "Update on School Law"
- Assisted the principal in the desegregation of test data and developed PowerPoint presentation for faculty
- Served as the building administrator whenever the principal was out of the building

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

Fall 2003 – Present Jefferson Elementary School, Charleston, Illinois

Teacher (5th & 6th Grade)

- Serve as the 5th & 6th grade team leader
- Serve on the negotiations committee

COACHING EXPERIENCES

Fall 2003 – Present **Jefferson Elementary School**, Charleston, Illinois
Head Coach for 5th and 6th grade volleyball teams

Fall 2000 – Fall 2003 **University of Champaign**, Champaign, Illinois
Assistant Volleyball Coach for Women's Team

PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIPS

American Council for the Teaching of Foreign Language
Illinois Principals Association
National Association of Elementary School Principals
Phi Delta Kappa

ACTIVITIES

Adopt-a-Student Tutor
Special Olympics Volunteer

REFERENCES

Dr. Edward Taylor
Superintendent
Illinois High School District
200 Lincoln Avenue
Charleston, Illinois 61920
(217) 500-0000

Ms. Ida Idaho
Principal
Illinois High School
200 Lincoln Avenue
Charleston, Illinois 61920
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Dr. Nick Osborne
Chair
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