

Tips for Writing a Persuasive Job Application Letter

This handout suggests strategies to help you write a job application letter that will persuade readers to interview you. (You'll find additional advice on writing job application letters at the SJSU Career Center's website, <http://www.careercenter.sjsu.edu/jobsearchtips/coverletters/coverletters.html>.)

Tips on content

1. **Address your letter to a particular person** if at all possible. If necessary, do some research to find out who should receive the letter.
2. **Clearly state exactly what job you are applying for** – don't make the reader guess. Remember that the employer may have multiple job openings at any time.
3. **Show how your skills and background match those the employer seeks.** Customize your letter for each job by identifying a few key requirements described in the job description and showing how you meet them.
4. **Use specific examples to demonstrate your qualifications.** General claims like "I am an experienced manager" are much less persuasive and memorable than statements like, "In my last job, I managed a team of six people for three years." "I produced a newsletter at my last job," is ok, but less impressive than "At my last job, I produced 12 issues of a 6-page monthly newsletter on downtown revitalization projects that was distributed to 300 business owners."
5. **Describe the results of your skills.** When possible, show how you achieved specific results in your previous jobs. "I work well with other people," is less convincing than, "During the year that I assisted residents submitting requests for zoning changes, three people contacted my supervisor to let her know how pleased they were with my help."
6. **Briefly explain why you want the particular position you are applying for.** Although the balance of the letter should focus on what you can offer to the employer, you also want the employer to know that, if offered the job, you are likely to accept it.
7. **Keep asking, "How would an employer react to what I've written?"** As you draft and then revise your letter, do careful audience analysis.

Other tips

1. **Don't make a single spelling or other typographical error.**
2. **Keep the letter to one page** that includes plenty of white space. The job letter should highlight a few key points, not tell your whole life story.
3. **Format the letter as you would a business letter.** (See the next page for an example.)
4. **Print the letter on good-quality paper if you will mail it.**

23 Green Street
San Francisco, CA 94618

January 24, 2008

Geraldine Chan
Hiring Manager
City of Radiant Plans
1111 Big Boulevard, Suite 1
Radiant Plans, CA 94611

Comment [AW1]: Include your mailing address. Note: in some letter layout styles, you might include your name, phone number, and email at the top of the page centered as if it were a letterhead.

Dear Ms. Chan:

Comment [AW2]: Include the recipient's mailing address. If *at all possible*, address the letter to a specific person.

Opening paragraph (The 3 “optional” items can be in any order)

- Begin by stating the specific job you are applying for. Add the job ID# and exact title, if you have them.
- Optional: Explain where you learned about the job.
- Optional: Summarize in a sentence the most important reason or two the employer would want to hire you.
- Optional: Briefly explain why you are interested in this job

Body paragraph(s)

- Explain how your experience, skills, and career goals qualify you for the position.

Closing paragraph(s)

- Explain the best way to contact you (e.g., email or phone) and if you plan to follow up on the letter (e.g., when you will call to check on the status of your application).
- Thank the reader.

Sincerely,

Giselle Planner

Comment [AW3]: Above your typed name, include your signature.