

COVER LETTERS

Each time you send your resume to a company or organization for an internship, co-op, or job opportunity, you must send it with a cover letter. The cover letter introduces you, tells why you are writing and encourages the employer to read your resume. **A well-written cover letter is just as important as a well-developed resume.**

TWO TYPES OF COVER LETTERS

1. Letters of application (See Sample #1): written when you know the actual job you are applying for.
2. Letters of Inquiry (See Sample #2): written when you are unaware of a specific job, but are inquiring as to possible openings. You need to be specific about what kind of position you are seeking. The employer will not decide for you.

FOUR BIG QUESTIONS A COVER LETTER MUST ANSWER TO BE EFFECTIVE

Paragraph #1: Why are you writing? Be concise and clear about what position or what kind of position you are interested in and how you learned about it.

Paragraph #2: Why this position/company interests me? This part of your cover letter should be tailored to the individual company/school that you are applying to. What attracts you to this organization? Why do you want to work for them? You may need to do some homework to find out more about the organization to write this paragraph. Visit the organization's website to learn more about who they are, their mission statement, services they provide, etc.

Paragraph #3: Why are you the best candidate for the position? Why should I hire you? Sell yourself! Describe special skills, accomplishments, that will make you an asset to the company/organization. Make specific connections between the position you are applying for and your experience and education. Be specific, give examples.

Final Paragraph: What is the next step? Let the employer know you will be contacting him/her regarding the possibility of an interview whenever this is possible. Be proactive.

GUIDELINES

EACH LETTER:

1. **MUST BE ORIGINAL!** Do not send out copies from a printer or duplicating machine. Although your resume usually remains standard, your cover letter should be tailored to a specific organization and/or available position.
2. **MUST BE IN STANDARD BUSINESS LETTER FORMAT!** Your letter should include a date, heading, inside address, greeting, body, closing and signature.
3. **SHOULD BE SENT TO A SPECIFIC PERSON!** This ensures that the letter and resume will end up on the right person's desk and enables an easy follow-up on your part because you know who received the correspondence. A specific name will also help you to personalize it appropriately.

If you do not have the individual's name, call the company/organization and ask the receptionist. The following request may be used as a model to obtain your own information. "I am sending some correspondence to your Director of Sales. Would you please give me the correct spelling of his/her name and also the official job title? Thank you."

If for some reason you cannot obtain this person's name, address the letter to the person's job title (eg. Director of Personnel) and use their title in your greeting. Also, when in doubt, use Ms. when greeting a woman.

4. **MUST BE TYPED!** Be sure that no typographical, spelling or grammatical errors are present. Many employers will not consider applicants if such errors exist. A haphazard attempt might indicate a potentially careless worker!

5. SHOULD BE BRIEF! (no more than one page), yet factual and professional. Avoid clichés, wordiness and pushiness.

6. SHOULD BE TYPED ON THE SAME PAPER STOCK AS YOUR RESUME! Purchase extra blank sheets of matching paper and envelopes. The cost is usually minimal and the effect is highly professional.

FOLLOW UP

BE SURE TO FOLLOW UP ANY APPLICATION OR INQUIRY. If you have not heard from the company or organization one to two weeks later or shortly after the closing date, then follow-up with a phone call. This allows you, to know the status of your application, shows the employer your initiative and interest, and puts you in control of your job search. Don't call your contact person more than once during the same week. Find out the decision timetable during the first call and follow-through accordingly.

SAMPLE #1 - Letter of Application

Your Address
City, State Zip
Date

Name of Person
Title
Organization Name
Address
City, State, Zip

Dear Name of Person,

I have enclosed my resume and application materials for the Elementary teaching position that was advertised in the Roberts Wesleyan College Career Center. In May I will be graduating with a Bachelor of Science degree in Inclusive Childhood Education with a 7-9 extension in Social Studies.

This past spring I had the opportunity to complete my student teaching in your district and I was impressed by the professional and caring attitude of the faculty, staff and administrators in your district. I believe that I would fit very nicely into this type of environment.

During my student teaching experience I had the opportunity to work at both the Elementary and Junior High levels. These experiences allowed me to not only lead entire class instructions, but to also work with students in individual and small group settings. As a teacher, I value creativity and individuality and try to use a variety of teaching strategies as well as hands on activities to meet the diverse needs of students. I believe you will agree that I am a caring individual, with strong organizational and communication skills. My goal as a teacher is to develop a safe, challenging and creative learning environment for my students.

Once again, I believe that I would be an asset to your school district. I look forward to discussing my skills at an upcoming interview. I look forward to hearing from you. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

(your signature)

Your name typed here

Sample #2 - Letter of Inquiry

Your Address
City, State Zip
Date

Name of Person
Title
Organization Name
Address
City, State, Zip

Dear Name of Person,

I am writing to inquire as to positions that may be available in the Human Resources Department of your company. In May I will be graduating with a Bachelor of Science degree in Business with a concentration in Human Resources from Roberts Wesleyan College.

Your company has an excellent reputation and I have been impressed by the quality of work that is produced by your organization as well as your commitment to your employees. I would truly appreciate an opportunity to contribute to your team.

During my 4 years at Roberts Wesleyan College I have had a variety of experiences that have provided me with the opportunity to learn and work. As a student intern I worked closely with the Director of Human Resources at the Rochester Business Alliance. In this position I coordinated their resume referral service, interviewed candidates and served as a liaison between the RBA and employers. I believe my organizational and communication skills as well as my leadership abilities will serve me well in a Human Resources position.

I would appreciate an opportunity to meet with you and further discuss my qualifications. I know I would be an asset to your organization. I can be reached at (585) 555-1111. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

(your signature)

Your name typed here