

WRITING COVER LETTERS

What to Know

The purpose of a cover letter is to introduce yourself and sell the employer on how well your specific skills, abilities and attributes match the organization's needs. It is critical you take the time to prepare a creative, hard-hitting cover letter that gets the attention of the reader immediately. This is the first document a potential employer will see about you and it has to do much of your initial marketing. The cover letter is a chance to "speak" to the reader or the interviewer. By developing skills- and achievement-oriented letters, you will give yourself a competitive edge. Each letter needs to be individually developed for each position.

What to Do

All effective cover letters have three main parts.

- They identify the specific job and how you learned about it.
- They match your skills, training, and experience with those required for the job, using your specific knowledge of the company.
- The last line should emphasize your interest in the job and indicate your plan for follow-up.

Cover Letter Guidelines:

1. The cover letter should not repeat your resume.
2. Use standard business letter format.
3. Type the letter on bond paper that matches your resume.
4. Proofread carefully. Make sure there are no typographical errors (typos) and the proper grammar was used.
5. Sell yourself! Make the reader want to speak with you. Be formal, polite, honest, and assertive.
6. Keep the letter to a page or less.
7. Sign and send the original. Keep a copy.
8. Address the letter to the hiring authority and include their title. If you are answering an ad that does not give a person's name, call the company and find out to whom it should be addressed. If you cannot get a specific name, start the letter with "Dear _____(manager of department/title of position)."
9. Do your homework on the company. (Refer to the section Research Companies).

NOTE: As you work on your own cover letters, use the sample letters on the following pages as a guide.



General Outline For A Cover Letter

Your Name
Your Street Address
City, State, Zip Code
Your Phone Number
Your E-mail Address

Date of Letter

Employer’s Name
Employer’s Title
Company Name
Street Address
City, State, Zip Code

Dear [Employer’s Name],

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INTRODUCTION PARAGRAPH: You want to tell the reader why you are writing and name the position or department for which you are applying. You also want to capture the reader’s attention. Mention how you heard about the organization or the opening. Name someone you and the reader know in common or someone in the company that knows you. Show you have done some research on the company by talking about new projects the company has taken on, the particular management philosophy they use, or citing something you have read about them.

BODY: In this section you want to build a connection between your background and the company’s needs. If you have any directly related experience or education, summarize it here so the reader can look for it in your resume. If you have used skills or have accomplishments that relate to the job, mention them here. You are effectively summarizing your skills as they relate to the company research you have done. Be sure to do this in a confident and positive manner.

CONCLUDING INFORMATION: Indicate your interest in the job. Tell the reader you will be calling to follow up. State you look forward to being able to discuss your background in an interview. Thank the reader for his/her time and consideration. Do not mention your unavailability—if you will not be available until three months from now, the cover letter is not the appropriate time to convey that information.

Sincerely,

Signature

A cover letter is usually your first opportunity to make an impression on an employer. Make it a good impression.

Sample Cover Letter

James Donaldson
10 Emerson Drive
Norfolk, Virginia 33333
(101) 555-1234

July 12, 20XX

Ms. Mary Smith
Personnel Director
Accounting Software International
5678 East Doral Street, Suite #1200
Lockridge, Tennessee 12345

Dear Ms. Smith:

I am applying to your ad in the Lockridge Examiner on July 8, 20XX.

I was particularly attracted to your position because of my interest in accounting software and the opportunity to use my computer skills in a more specialized career.

As you will notice on my resume, I have extensive experience and skills that are relevant to this position. My particular expertise is in implementation and training conversions to new computer software systems and programs. I strongly feel my talents could be valuable to Accounting Software International in achieving its' corporate goals.

I believe I would be a good candidate for your position as a service representative. I will call you next week. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

James Donaldson

Enclosure

Nabil T. Rama
123 Williams Lane
Castro Valley CA 12345
(555) 111-1111

September 15, 20XX

Mr. R.L. Montrose
Department K
Glick, Schilling & Martin Co.
1234 Drawbridge Road
McLean, VA 12345

Dear Mr. Montrose,

I am applying for the position of translator in response to your ad in the *San Francisco Examiner* on September 14.

I was particularly attracted to this position because of my interest in international affairs, travel, and the opportunity to use my language skills. This seems a perfect opening to combine my twenty-year career in the military with a possibility for an exciting future with Glick, Schilling & Martin.

I have an excellent command of both the Arabic and English languages, as well as international exposure through my career travels and self-education.

I believe I would be a good candidate for your position as translator and as we agreed upon, I will call you Thursday to follow-up. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Nabil T. Rama

Enclosure

Sample Cover Letter

John Doe
12 Foothill Lane
Berkeley, California 12345
(555) 111-1111

September 15, 20XX

Mr. Dwight Smith
Chief Executive Officer
Genentech, Inc.
1234 Point San Bruno Blvd.
South San Francisco, CA 00000

Dear Mr. Smith,

It was a pleasure to attend the Genentech Shareholders meeting last week.

After the meeting, I introduced myself to you and expressed my excitement following the company as a shareholder and now my desire to work directly for Genentech.

During the question period, I asked if the company had any plans for the treatment of breast cancer. The treatment of this disease and others by the activation and restoration of the immune system with the immune or regulatory drugs created at Genentech is of particular interest to me.

I would be thrilled for the opportunity to contribute to the work your company is doing in this field.

Enclosed is my resume which you kindly requested. Thank you very much for your interest and I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Sincerely,

John Doe

Enclosure

Thomas Gaines
123 Southbend Road
Suitland, SD 12345
ThomasG@email.com

April 10, 20XX

Mr. Wallace
Human Resources Specialist
ABC Corporation
Suitland, MD 12345

Dear Mr. Wallace:

I was so pleased at the opportunity to meet you this past Thursday at the Chamber of Commerce Job Fair. Your remarks to the group were memorable and rich with implications for area businesses.

As we discussed on Thursday afternoon, I have just relocated to the Suitland area and seek a management position in the manufacturing industry. Your firm's expansion sounds like a great opportunity for me to contribute to the growth of a successful machinery company. I have twenty-two years of experience in management and supervision with a variety of manufacturing companies. Furthermore, I have specialized computer training that will be useful in tracking your company's production, budget, and performance. I feel my skills and experience are a perfect match for the management position you described to me during our conversation.

I look forward to talking more about opportunities at ABC Corporation. I will call on Wednesday to set up an appointment with you to discuss these items further.

Most Sincerely,

Thomas Gaines

Enclosure