

THE COVER LETTER

Each time you submit your résumé to an employer, you should enclose a cover letter. The cover letter serves several important functions:

- Explains why you are submitting the résumé.
- Introduces you to the employer.
- Acts as a vehicle for you to “sell yourself” more effectively to the employer and is the key to creating interest in your candidacy.

The cover letter gives you the opportunity to draw an employer’s attention to the skills and experience outlined in your résumé. You can also expand upon information which particularly matches the position for which you wish to be considered. The cover letter can highlight special achievements which might otherwise go overlooked.

In summarizing your qualifications, highlight your most appropriate skills or background in relation to a particular position without simply reiterating the information on your résumé. Refer the reader to your enclosed résumé for further details of your past accomplishments.

There are two types of cover letters:

1. The “**letter of inquiry**” is written when you are asking an employer for information about possible job openings in a particular area. If you have previously obtained information about the organization, be sure to mention this in your letter as it indicates you are sincerely interested and have done your research.
2. The “**letter of application**” is written when you are applying for a specific opening. It provides the opportunity for you to call attention to your education or experience which is appropriate to the open position.

Remember: Similar to the Career Objective on your résumé, the focus of the cover letter is what you can do for the organization—not what it can do for you!

You must personalize your cover letter by **preparing each letter individually** and addressing it to an **individual** rather than a title or department. There are many ways to find contact names and information. The directories in the Career Resource Center, employer literature, and personal inquiry to the organization are several ways of obtaining contact names. CareerSearch®, the net-based employer research system, is another avenue for researching organizations and obtaining contact information. VAULT® Online Career Library includes information and contact data about organizations. CareerSearch® and VAULT® are both accessible through the Career Services’ web site.

As with the résumé, use a **letter quality printer**. Duplicated or obvious form letters are inappropriate and unprofessional. The cover letter should be **no more than one page long** and should be produced on the same paper as your résumé and reference sheet.

The following checklist may be helpful in avoiding some of the mistakes people make in preparing their cover letters.

COVER LETTER CHECKLIST

Use this checklist to evaluate your cover letter and avoid common mistakes.

- _____ Is it addressed to a particular person (unless it is a response to a blind ad)? Do not use the person's first name in the salutation (ex. Write "Dear Mr. Robinson:" rather than "Dear David Robinson:").

- _____ Is the salutation followed by a colon rather than a comma?

- _____ Have you told the employer exactly what position you are applying for and how you found out about it?

- _____ Have you stated why you are interested in the position and the organization?

- _____ Have you told the employer what you can do for the organization rather than what it can do for you?

- _____ Did you use specific examples to sell your skills?

- _____ Have you avoided rewriting your résumé in your cover letter?

- _____ Is the sentence structure varied? Have you limited the use of the words "I" and "My" at the beginning of each sentence?

- _____ Did you express appreciation for the employer considering your application?

- _____ Is it an original letter rather than an obviously mass-produced copy?

- _____ Is it neat and attractive?

- _____ Is the letter centered on the page with equal top and bottom margins?

- _____ Is every word spelled correctly? Grammar, punctuation, and capitalization correct? Is it free of typographical errors?

- _____ Does the whole letter fit on one page?

- _____ Have you signed your name in black or blue ink?

- _____ Is it printed on high-quality paper that matches your résumé? Is it printed on a high-quality printer? Does the watermark go the correct direction?

COVER LETTER

(Make top and bottom margins approximately equal)

November 14, 2006

7650 College Drive
Athens, Ohio 45701

Ms. Jennifer Wheaton
Director of Personnel
United Greeting Card Company
P.O. Box 459
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania 43201

Dear Ms. Wheaton:

Opening Paragraph: State why you are writing, the position for which you are applying/type of work you are seeking. Mention how you heard of the opening or the organization.

Middle Paragraph: This is the main body of what you want to communicate: the skills, experience, education, etc. that may be of interest to this particular employer. You may want to refer to the enclosed résumé but do not re-hash the entire résumé; mention only the highlights that will make them want to read the résumé. Be sure to address the key points described in the want ad or job posting. You may also want to discuss what attracts you to this position/organization.

Closing Paragraph: Mention your sincere interest in an interview opportunity, and thank them for the consideration.

Sincerely,

James P. Brewster

James P. Brewster

Enclosure

(If a résumé or other information is enclosed, be sure to refer to it in the letter)

ADDITIONAL CORRESPONDENCE

All of these letters must be personalized, i.e. sent to an individual. Consult Career Services if you need more assistance preparing any job search correspondence!

Post-interview “thank you” letter (after every interview). This short letter is sent immediately after the interview and defines your level of interest in the position. It should help distinguish you as a special candidate since many candidates fail to utilize this letter. The letter should do the following:

- Restate the date of the interview.
- Thank the employer for the interview.
- Further demonstrate your interest in the position or state that you no longer wish to be considered.
- Remind the employer of one or two key reasons why you feel particularly qualified for the position.
- If you forgot to discuss pertinent information regarding your qualifications, mention it now.
- Refer to template and sample later in this handout for specific examples.

*****Thank you letters are not only for job interviews! They may be sent out after making a strong contact at a career fair, prenight, information session, informational interview, or career shadowing experience!**

Acknowledgement of a job offer (acknowledges receipt of job offer without accepting). It is very important that you acknowledge an employer’s job offer within two or three days of receipt. This letter:

- Indicates date of receipt of the letter, position offered to you, and the salary offered.
- Reaffirms your interest in the position.
- Gives a date by which you will contact the employer with your decision. (It would be inappropriate to ask for a decision date more than two or three weeks in the future.)

Acceptance letter (to formally accept a job offer). Once you have made the decision to accept a position you should notify the employer at once. Be sure to convey your positive feelings about the position and your future with your new employer. This letter should be sent even though you may have accepted over the telephone. Again you need to:

- Indicate date of receipt of the employer’s letter/e-mail/ phone call, position offered to you, and the salary.
- Express personal thanks to particular people in the organization who were especially helpful during the interview process.
- Indicate or confirm a starting date within the employer’s guidelines.
- If you anticipate an address change before you begin employment, indicate where you can be reached in the meantime.
- If the position calls for your relocation, indicate your travel plans and your expected date of arrival.

Position rejection letter (to turn down a job offer). You need to make this letter just as positive as any other. Do not make an unfavorable comparison to other offers nor belittle the organization. It is important to maintain a warm tone as you thank the employer but reject his/her offer. Your letter should:

- Indicate your appreciation for the offer.
- If applicable, indicate you are turning it down for a position more suited to your current career goals or for graduate school.
- Mention some positive reactions to your interview.
- Don’t forget to personally thank anyone who was particularly helpful. REMEMBER: you may want to re-apply to this organization, or network with people you met, so don’t burn a bridge.

Follow-up letter If you have not heard from the employer after 10-14 days regarding correspondence you sent to them, personal contact at a conference, career fair, job interview, etc., you may want to inquire about the status of your application. Your letter should:

- Recap the history of your application, interview(s), or personal contact with dates.
- Reaffirm your interest in the employer.
- Remind the employer of your qualifications.
- Indicate your appreciation of the employer's cooperation.

Letter of Apology If you miss an on-campus interview, which was schedule through our office, you should send a letter of apology.

- Refer to apology template later in this handout

THANK YOU LETTER

(Make top and bottom margins approximately equal)

October 13, 2006

123 Main St.
Athens, Ohio 45701

Ms. Deanna Harris
Director of Employee Assistance Program
XYZ Corporation
P.O. Box 459
Greensboro, NC 27455

Dear Ms. Harris:

Opening Paragraph: Thank the person for the interview or for speaking with you at a specific networking-type event. Restate the date of the interview or event where you met the person. Mention the type of position(s) you are interested in with this specific organization. Make sure you mention the organization's name so the letter doesn't sound generic.

Middle Paragraph: This paragraph has several options. You might want to explain your interest in the employer, demonstrate interest in the position by explaining one or two key reasons you feel your background is a good fit for the position, and/or mention something relevant that you forgot to bring up at the interview, career fair, or other event. If you are no longer interested in being considered for a position with this employer, you should state that in the thank you letter.

Closing Paragraph: Thank them again for the interview or their time and mention that they should feel free to contact you if they have additional questions.

Sincerely,

Rachael Miller

Rachael Miller

SAMPLE HANDWRITTEN THANK YOU NOTE

This type of note would be written on a professional-looking thank you card or similar note card. What is shown below would be the inside of the note card.

October 13, 2006

Dear Ms. Harris:

I enjoyed speaking with you at the Fall 2006 Ohio University Career Fair on October 11 regarding opportunities with XYZ Corporation. Based on our discussion, my background in Social Work and Psychology would be a strong fit for your Employee Assistance Program at XYZ.

My internship with the Wake County Women's Shelter allowed me to become familiar with the range of community services available to individuals in need and gain experience with intake and referrals. Volunteer experiences with various non-profit agencies served only to expand further my knowledge and understanding of issues that people may present when utilizing an Employee Assistance Program.

Again, it was good to talk with you at the career fair. I look forward to the possibility of an interview with XYZ Corporation in the near future. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have additional questions.

Sincerely,

Rachael Miller

LETTER OF APOLOGY

(Make top and bottom margins approximately equal)

Date

Your Address
City, State Zip

Company Representative
Title
Company
Address
City, State Zip

Dear Ms./Mrs./Mr./Dr. Company Representative's Last Name:

Opening Paragraph: State why you are writing: To apologize for missing your interview, or for canceling late.

Middle Paragraph: This is the main body of what you want to communicate: Why you missed the interview or cancelled late.

Closing Paragraph: Express your sincere apology again and thank them for the opportunity.

Sincerely,

Your Signature

Your Name

This letter should be centered on the page, no grammatical or typographical errors, and signed.