

COVER LETTER

Your written correspondence contributes to the employer's first impression of you. It will communicate how well you organize and express your thoughts in a business letter. All correspondence should be neat in appearance, on good quality paper, and without errors. Your letters will give you an extra opportunity to impress the employer. **Keep copies of all correspondence.**

Your letters should be in a basic business format. Include your return address, date of writing, employer's full address, salutation, introduction, body of the letter, and closing. There is no one format that is perfect for all job correspondence letters. Refer to the suggested formats, but design letters that best suit your needs.

Most of the principles discussed in résumé writing also apply in business letter writing:

- Be positive, to the point, and use expressive and powerful words.
- Use an orderly structure and be neat.
- Business letters must be simple and direct, yet not so brief that the meaning may be misconstrued or be doubtful.
- The conventional cover letter is typed, and a single page is long enough.
- Send only the original. Tailor your letter to suit each individual company's needs.

Throughout your job search you may be required to write various types of letters. These may include a Cover Letter, Follow Up or Status Letter and a Thank You Letter. The following pages outline correspondence guidelines and suggested letter formats. Make sure to give your business letter your own style, keeping in mind a positive attitude.

CORRESPONDENCE GUIDELINES

- Keep copies of all your correspondence to and from employers. This provides you with a clear record of dates and the content of your previous letters.
- If you do not hear from employers within the designated time frame, follow up by phone or e-mail indicating the date of your last letter. This tells employers that you are a determined, well-organized individual who is very interested in employment with their company.
- Emphasize your interest in and qualifications for the position and highlight the contribution you can make to the company. Indicate your willingness to supply more information or meet with the company at their convenience. Your letters and résumé must reflect your professionalism and your determination that would make you a great asset to the company.
- And do follow up again if necessary! It is now appropriate to call the employer to inquire about the status of your job application. It is much harder to deny your request for an information interview by phone than it is to put aside your résumé. Remember, employers receive many résumés and requests for information interviews each day.

SUGGESTED BUSINESS LETTER FORMAT

Your Address

Date of Writing

Employer's Name (Don't know the name? Phone, get and use it)

Employer's Title

Company Name

Address

City and Province

Postal Code

Dear Mr./Mrs./Miss/Ms. (Name of Employer):

Dear Hiring Manager: (when there is no contact person)

INTRODUCTION The introduction should answer the 4 "Ws" Who, Why, What and Where.

Who: Introduce yourself to the employer and start with a strong sentence that demonstrates why they should be interested in you.

Why: Indicate why you are writing and the reason you are interested in the company.

What: List the job title or describe what type of job interests you.

Where: Note whether you are responding to an advertised position or wish to be considered for a prospective opening or if you were referred to the company by a friend or a colleague.

BODY OF LETTER Sell yourself; give a summary of your relevant experience and skills and how they meet the employer's needs; focus on your program of studies; highlight your strongest skills, accomplishments, personal traits and values; demonstrate your company research; This is a chance to outline your skills as they relate to the job. Use descriptive, positive, action verbs to describe what you can do. When answering an advertisement, make sure to include all the requirements listed in the job posting (e.g. academic qualifications, skills, qualities, etc.). This makes the task of matching you to the job easier, especially if the initial screening is done by a human resources department.

ORGANIZATION Explain briefly why you would like to work for this employer. Demonstrate that you know something about the company. Visit its Web site and look at its vision, its mission or the section "About Us". This paragraph lets the employer know that you have written this letter specifically for them. This is also good research in preparation for a phone interview. The employer may ask you: "What do you know about our Company/Organization and why do you want to work for us?"

CLOSING Restate what you can do for the company; thank the employer for their attention or consideration given. Ask for action; either a follow up telephone call or meeting to further discuss your qualifications; include your phone number and e-mail address; indicate when you are available and when you will follow up; show consideration for the employer's time by requesting a convenient time to meet. (e.g. I will contact you by (date) to inquire about the status of my application). You will then avoid the frustration of waiting for a reply.

Sincerely,
(leave 4 - 6 lines)

YOUR SIGNATURE

Your name (typewritten)

Encl.

COVER LETTER

The cover letter is intended to introduce your résumé to the reader. It has to be eye-catching, interesting and the content must impress! Its' purpose is to introduce you and your résumé to the employer. The cover letter accompanies the résumé and emphasizes key points on your résumé related to the employer's needs.

The letter must be impressive to encourage the employer to read through your résumé. If it does not catch the employer's attention, it may be eliminated along with your résumé and only chance for an interview.

It must be very effective to persuade an employer to meet with you to further explore your qualifications, skills and abilities relevant to the employer's needs.

FOLLOW-UP OR STATUS LETTER

Follow-up activities are appropriate after sending a résumé to an employer. The purpose is to increase the employer's awareness of your interest in the position and company.

A week after you have sent in your résumé or application, follow up with an employer by writing, calling or e-mailing the company to inquire about your status in the hiring process. If the company has already completed the hiring process this is an opportunity to ask if there are other positions that will become available or does the employer know of other employment opportunities.

Your demonstrated initiative and enthusiasm will work in your favour. Not everyone uses follow-up strategies. This assertive approach can give you a decided advantage in being hired.

THANK YOU NOTE

After an interview it is good business etiquette to send a thank you note to the employer. It is best to write a thank you note within twenty-four hours of receiving information or meeting with the employer, to give you an advantage in the selection process.

Your thank you letter may serve to demonstrate appreciation for the employer's time and information; to remind the employer of who you are and the position you are interested in; to reaffirm your qualifications; to express your enthusiasm; to convey information which was overlooked or unavailable; or to confirm the next step in the recruiting process. Be sincere. Sending a thank you letter is an effective job search strategy. It may give you an advantage over other applicants.

A thank you note can be a hand written card, a typed letter or an e-mail. This will be dependent on the employment field you are entering. For example, social sciences and health sciences, a hand written thank you card might be more appropriate, while a typed letter may be better for a business environment and an e-mail for an IT department. Select the method that is most appropriate for you.