

Guide to Writing Cover Letters



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COVER LETTERS

WHAT ARE THEY?

A form of written communication that accompanies the resume.

WHAT FUNCTIONS DO COVER LETTERS SERVE?

- Provide your full name, address, and telephone number so the employer can reach you;
- Tell the employer how you heard about the job;
- Tell why you are interested in the job;
- Call attention to your resume (but does not repeat what is in it);
- Express an eagerness to interview; and
- Thank employers for their consideration of your application

WHAT ARE THE BASIC PARTS TO A COVER LETTER?

- Your address
- Today's date
- Name and address of the person/organization you are contacting
- Salutation
- Paragraph # 1 – Explains why you are writing
- Paragraph # 2 and 3 – Explains how your skills relate to the job you are applying for
- Paragraph #4 – Requests a reply or interview
- Complimentary closing
- Your signature
- Your typed name
- The word "Enclosure"

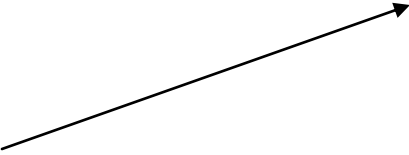
HOW IS THE COVER LETTER STRUCTURED?

Your street address
City, State, Zip Code
Phone number

Today's Date

Employer's name and title
Employer's street address
City, State, Zip code

If possible, use the employer's name



Dear Employer's name:

Paragraph 1: State the specific position or type of work for which you are applying and mention how you heard of the opening. When you don't know if the company has vacancies, use this paragraph to inquire about possible employment opportunities.

Paragraph 2 –3: Explain how your skills relate to the job for which you are applying. If you have had relevant work experience or related education, be sure to point it out but do not reiterate your entire resume. Do this in a confident manner and remember that the reader will view your cover letter as an example of your writing skills.


Paragraph 4: Let the reader know when you would be available for an interview. In closing, thank the reader for reading your letter and taking the time to consider your application.

Sincerely,

Your Handwritten Signature

Your typed name
Enclosure

This lets the reader know that a resume is attached



WHAT ARE THE TYPES OF COVER LETTERS?

I. COLD COVER LETTERS

A letter written to an organization inquiring whether they have vacancies in your career field.

II. TARGETED COVER LETTERS

A letter written to an organization that details the exact position you are seeking. Usually it is a response to an advertisement.

III. FOLLOW UP COVER LETTERS / THANK YOU LETTERS

A letter written to the employer who conducted your interview. This letter reminds the interviewer why you are the best choice for the job, repeats what they said about when you would be hearing from them, and it thanks them for their time.

Follow-up letters are also used after you talk with or meet with someone who has provided you with a job lead.

Once you have landed a job, a follow-up letter shares the good news with the people who have helped you. It tells them the name of the company you work for and thanks them for their help.

IV. REFERRAL COVER LETTERS

Suppose you are talking to a friend of a friend and they suggest you call someone else they know that could use a person with your skills. That is called a referral. The friend is sending you, or referring you to someone else.

V. NETWORKING COVER LETTERS

Written to generate Informational Interviews, which allow you to obtain job search advice in a specific career area.

VI. ACCEPTANCE COVER LETTERS

This is written to officially accept a job offer, confirm the terms of employment, and reinforce the employer's decision to hire you.

VII. WITHDRAWAL COVER LETTERS

This is written to inform an employer that you have accepted another offer or that you will not be accepting their offer and that you withdraw your application from further consideration.

WHEN YOU SIT DOWN TO WRITE A COVER LETTER, YOUR JOB IS TO GET THE EMPLOYER'S ATTENTION. YOU CAN GUIDE THE EMPLOYER BY USING PHRASES SUCH AS:

- According to my resume, I have experience in...
- My background shows that I am highly skilled and trained in...
- While at Bill's Auto Shop, I was promoted twice, named Employee of the month, etc.]
- Through my work experience I have acquired the following skills...
- I am enthusiastic, motivated, and have a strong drive for success.
- My communication skills, both orally and written are...

QUICK REMINDERS

- Never address a letter "To Whom it May Concern."
- Do not say "Mr. Wright referred me to you" unless it is true and unless Mr. Wright has given you permission to use his name.
- Keep copies of all the letters that you send out.
- Customize each cover letter, making it fit the company.
- Make sure the letter is typo-free, that all spelling is correct, and that it is on the same quality paper as your resume.
- Type your cover letter in the same font as your resume, making sure it is properly aligned from top to bottom and left to right.
- Keep your sentences short and straight to the point.
- Write as if you are actually talking to the reader.

Sample Cold Cover Letter

345 Flower Street
Millsville, Alabama 78967
999-666-7777

October 1, 20XX

Mr. David King, Vice President
Best Hotels
4515 Sand Street
Scottsdale, Alabama 78965

Dear Mr. King:

I am writing to inquire about possible job opportunities within your company.

As my resume indicates, I have worked as a HR Generalist at Motels In-The-Sand for two years. My duties included resolving complex personnel problems, developing an annual budget and keeping accurate records of all contracts, purchase orders and budgetary expenses.

My master's degree in marketing atop a bachelor's in business management, plus my three years in customer service at the Holiday Inn have provided me with the necessary skills and knowledge required for the field of business.

I welcome the opportunity to meet with you to discuss how my qualifications could benefit your company.

Sincerely,

Patrick Paul

Patrick Paul
Enclosure

Sample Targeted Cover Letter

780 Beacon Road
Walden, Nevada 45678
777-888-4343

January 25, 20XX

Mary Silver, Director of Human Resources
Wainwright Finance
430 Airmont Avenue
Airport, Nevada 45688

Dear Ms. Silver:

I'm interested in the Customer Service Representative position advertised in the January 22nd Walden Times.

My past employment as a counter clerk and salesperson helped me develop a very successful manner of dealing courteously with the public. Even under stressful or busy circumstances, I have the ability to remain polite and unruffled, and still get the job done.

Qualities I will bring to Wainwright Finance include:

- Quick learner
- Pleasant voice and phone manner
- Work well independently and as a team player

I am available for an interview at your convenience and would appreciate the opportunity to further discuss this position with you. Thank you for considering me for this position and I hope to hear from you soon.

Sincerely,

Toni Parker

Toni Parker
Enclosure

1234 Flower Parkway
Baltimore, Maryland 21255
410-222-1922

April 7, 20XX

Ms. Marlo James, Director
Falcon Crest Publishing
12 East Madison Street
Baltimore, Maryland 21345

Dear Ms. James:

I want to thank you very much for interviewing me yesterday for the Associate Engineer position. I enjoyed meeting you and learning more about your research and design work.

My enthusiasm for the position and my interest in working for AES were strengthened as a result of the interview. I think my education and internship experiences fit nicely with the job requirements, and I'm sure that I could make a significant contribution to your organization over time.

I am excited about the possibility of becoming a member of your team. You provide the kind of opportunity I seek. Please feel free to call me at 410-222-1922 if I can provide you with any additional information. I look forward to hearing from you.

Again, thank you for the interview and your consideration.

Sincerely,

John Parks

John Parks

25 Flood Street
Walden, Illinois 60778
782-777-0000

March 2, 2007

James Bonnomi
59 Quincy Avenue
Parkville, Illinois 60771

Dear Mr. Bonnomi:

Thank you for your time yesterday when we spoke about your experience in customer service. You were very patient in helping me understand all the kinds of jobs that I might be qualified to fill.

Thank you so much for the ideas about contacting companies like LaSalle Investments, and for Mrs. Leona Brady's name. When I contact her, I will use your name, as you have so kindly permitted me to do.

When I do get a job, I will be sure to let you know.

Sincerely,

James Johnson

James Johnson

Sample Referral Cover Letter

67 Oak Street
Washington, DC 20007
202-555-9999

October 17, 20XX

Dr. Hillary Jones
Department of History
American University
452 College Street
Washington, DC 20009

Dear Dr. Jones:

Dr. Anthony Black, History Professor at the University of Florida, suggested that I contact you regarding possible faculty positions in your department.

My background includes a Bachelor's in Education, Master's in Teacher Leadership and Development and a Ph.D. in History. I have taught History at both the high school and college levels for well over 15 years. I was founder of the Coalition for Students interested in History and have conducted several pilot studies.

I have enclosed a copy of my curriculum vitae along with a list of my published studies and articles. I look forward to meeting with you and thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Dr. Kathy Myers

Dr. Kathy Myers
Enclosure

Sample Networking Cover Letter

112 Walker Avenue
New York, New York 11111
555-555-5555

June 21, 20XX

Ms. B. Friendly
Associate Media Planner
What-U-Want Company
001 Park Avenue
New York, New York 11115

Dear Ms. Friendly:

I was delighted to find your name in the Anne Arundel Community College Alumni Career Network listing as I am seeking a chance to speak with experienced professional regarding career opportunities in advertising and public relations. I completed an internship with a local advertising company, last summer, and gained an overall understanding of the business. However, I would like to learn more about the national and international advertising market place and would appreciate hearing your perspective.

I would greatly value the possibility of talking with you about your work and your point of view on effective job search strategies for entry-level positions in the advertising field. I will call you next week to see if we might be able to arrange a convenient time to talk. In the meantime, feel free to contact me at 555-555-5555. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Colds

Jennifer Colds

Sample Acceptance Cover Letter

41 Pine Drive
Fair Haven, New Jersey 07171
777-999-0000

May 15, 20XX

Mr. B. Flat
General Manager
WZXY Radio Super Station
1 Media Tower
Fairfax, Virginia 01255

Dear Mr. Flat:

It is with great pleasure that I accept the position of Production Assistant that we discussed on May 13th. I am confident that I will make a valuable contribution to the production team at WZXY and I am grateful for this exciting opportunity to join the staff of The Super Station.

Per our conversation, I will report to Ms. Binley in the Human Resources office on Monday, June 3rd. I plan on arriving in Virginia next week to begin apartment hunting. As you recommended, I will contact Mr. Rayburn to seek his advice on temporary housing options.

Thank you for your assistance during the interview process. I am very excited about my new responsibilities at WZXY and look forward to joining your staff.

Sincerely,

Melissa Miller

Melissa Miller

Sample Withdrawal Cover Letter

31 Spruce Place
Pine Needle, Michigan 33333
777-000-8888

June 10, 20XX

Ms. Gayle Storm
Customer Relations Manager
ABC Financial
420 Port Street
Baltimore, Maryland 24444

Dear Ms. Storm:

I am writing to inform you that I wish to withdraw my name from the applicant pool for the Client Services position as I have accepted another job offer. My decision was difficult, as the Client Services position with your firm seemed challenging to me.

I very much appreciate your full consideration of my application and the time you took explaining the position to me on my interview day. I was impressed with your company's mission statement and corporate culture. Best wishes to you as you continue the hiring process. Thank you, again, for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Chris Black

Chris Black

Updated 1/2010