

High Impact Job Search Correspondence



**Professional Experience
& Career Planning**
C.W. Post Campus/Long Island University

Kumble Hall, Lower Level
516.299.2251

pep@cwpost.liu.edu
www.liu.edu/pep

High Impact Job Search Correspondence

Revised 2002

Preface

Welcome!

This handbook will take you through the steps of composing job search correspondence. As with a resume, there is no one correct way to write a cover letter or follow-up letter. However, certain guidelines and tips can be helpful in putting thoughts to paper in a way that will grab your prospective employer's attention. We will give examples of each type of letter. This handbook will also discuss the composition of follow-up and thank you letters. Follow-up and thank you letters are sent after an interview.

Before we continue, we need to dispel a myth about the cover letter. Cover letters are not optional. Employers expect them whenever you send, fax or otherwise transmit your resume.

Therefore, take your cover letter, and all job search correspondence, seriously. Your communication skills will be assessed based on these letters. If you find letters difficult to write, please consider taking a course in writing or find related books that can help you compose written material. A good reference to have on hand is Strunk and White's classic, *The Elements of Style*. This book is inexpensive, small and illustrates tips on grammar, punctuation, and writing style.

Your cover letter, like your resume, is a representation of *you*. You will want to make the best impression possible.

THE COVER LETTER

The Beginning

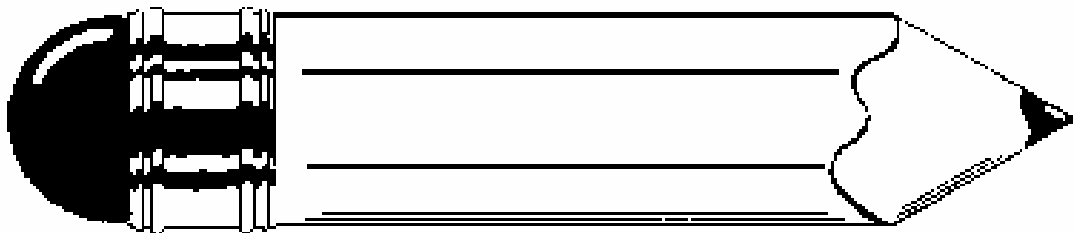
To begin the cover letter writing process you:

MUST collect these pieces of information:

1. Your address and the date.
2. The titles of the person to whom you will write, the organization's name, and full address.
3. The name of your network contact, the newspaper and date of newspaper issue, or other information regarding how you know about the position.
4. Information that impresses you about the company. The best cover letters demonstrate your familiarity and interest in the organization. You can research the organization by reviewing company literature, newspapers, or web sites. (See Appendix A for additional resources available through the B. Davis Schwartz Memorial Library - Center for Business Research.)
5. Your specific training, skills, achievements, and qualifications as they apply to the position.

TRY to collect these pieces of information:

1. The name of the position.
2. The name of the person in the organization who manages the hiring for the job you want.

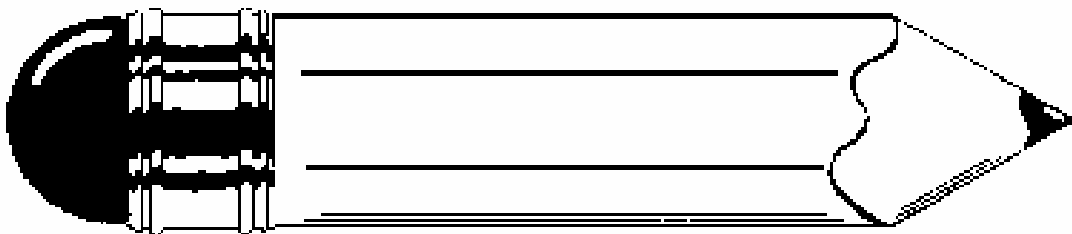


COVER LETTER TIPS

1. Address your cover letter to a named individual. This will give your letter and resume a greater chance of getting to the correct person and less of a chance of ending up in a low priority pile. If you absolutely cannot obtain the name of the person to whom you are sending the resume, do not use gender-biased salutations (i.e., "Dear Sir or Dear Madam"). Address the letter to the Human Resources Manager, the Director, or to whoever seems appropriate in the organization to which you are writing.
2. Project confidence, but **DON'T** be arrogant, negative, or too humble. This is probably the hardest task in cover letter composition. Show that you trust your skills and that you understand that you can make a difference in the prospective job. Give examples of your skills and relate the types of things you have learned from certain experiences. Try to stay away from statements like, "I know my skills and abilities will fit into what your company needs." This boastful statement can elicit the employer response, "How does *she* know what *we* need?" A better way to phrase this idea, "I hope to use my skills and abilities to further the goals of your organization."
3. Tailor each cover letter to each position. Make each employer feel special and give the employer the impression that this is *the job* for you.
4. Tell the employer the position for which you would like consideration. This will convey focus on a career. **DON'T** describe your objective in vague terms, for instance, "a people oriented position with growth potential that uses my academic experience and training." This statement conveys nothing.
5. Send a laser printed letter on the same type of paper (preferably, a conservatively colored 22-25 lb. "resume paper") on which you submitted your resume. Purchase matching envelopes.
6. Your letter should answer the question, "Why should I hire this person?"
7. Keep it brief. Three or four paragraphs are sufficient.
8. Use simple, uncomplicated language and sentence structure. Avoid cliches (i.e., "I have taken the liberty of enclosing my resume for your serious consideration...") Use action words and avoid passive voice to create dynamic sentences. **DON'T** send a cover letter containing grammatical errors, misspellings, or smudges.

COVER LETTER TIPS (continued)

9. Be sure the potential employer can reach you. Provide a telephone number where either a person or answering machine (with a professional greeting) will answer all calls.
10. Make a copy of each cover letter for your own records.
11. Feel free to write a company a second time if a reasonable amount of time has passed with no response.
12. Inform the employer that you will call to discuss the possibilities of an interview and **DEFINITELY** follow-up and place that call. This will give your resume more of a chance of remaining on the employer's desk.
13. Always include a cover letter when faxing or e-mailing a resume. It is also a good idea to include a fax transmittal sheet as well so that you can indicate the number of pages to expect in the event that all pages do not transmit. To ensure that the pages transmit clearly, set the fax machine on fine print mode and be sure your resume and cover letter are on plain white paper.
14. Follow-up your faxed or e-mailed cover letter and resume with a traditional mail version.
15. Sign your letters!!!



COVER LETTER OUTLINE

Following is a general outline of the content of a cover letter

Use no less than an 11 pt. font and no more than a 12 pt. font.
Set left and right margins to 1".
Use 1" for the top margin (if not using a letterhead).

Jacqueline Jobhunter

15 Pep Street
Brookville, NY 11548
(516) 555-1212
jjobhunter@bogus.liunet.edu

If using a letterhead, set the top margin to .25" and place letterhead all the way to the top.

2 spaces

June 7, 2002

Ms. Jane R. Employer
Human Resource Manager
QRS Widgets, Ltd.
1221 Hornswaggle Avenue
Nowhere, NY 10002

Be sure to use the person's appropriate title (unless specified as Mrs., Miss, Dr., etc., always use Ms. for a woman).

A colon, NOT a comma, is standard here.

Dear Ms. Employer:

First Paragraph: Grab the reader's attention. . .tell why you are writing . . .if you are writing a letter from a network contact, insert your contact's name. . .display your specific knowledge about the organization obtained from research -- make sure this information is something that impresses you about them and something that makes you want to be a part of their organization.

In no more than two paragraphs: Briefly describe your academic and professional qualifications. . .be descriptive and explicit but be concise. . .use action verbs. . .cite examples of your qualifications for the position sought. . .highlight important ideas in your resume. . .detail why you should be considered for the position...

Final Paragraph: In most circumstances, ask for an interview appointment and inform the employer, when appropriate, that you will call to discuss the possibilities of an interview. . . in some circumstances this will not be possible (maybe because you do not have the employer's telephone number, the employer is requesting no calls, the person is unreachable, or because you do not know who specifically to contact). Alert the reader to your telephone number and address and indicate that they may call or write to set up an interview appointment. . .thank the employer for their time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Jacqueline Jobhunter

Five spaces are standard between "Sincerely," and your typed name. If faxing your resume and cover letter directly from your computer, try using a script font for your signature; otherwise sign your letter by hand.

Jacqueline Jobhunter

Enclosure

Type "Enclosure" at the end of the letter to alert the employer not to forget your resume.

Use single spacing between lines with an extra space between paragraphs.

This page illustrates acceptable business letter formats

Your Name
Address
City, State Zip
Phone, Email

Date

Employer
Job title
Organization
Address
City, State Zip

Dear _____:

Sincerely,

Your name

Your Address
City, State Zip
Phone, Email
Date

Employer
Job title
Organization
Address
City, State Zip

Dear _____:

Sincerely,

Your name

Your Name
Address
City, State Zip

Date

Employer
Job title
Organization
Address
City, State Zip

Dear _____:

Sincerely,

Your name

THE FOLLOW-UP LETTER ...

... AFTER AN INTERVIEW

After an interview, write a follow-up or thank you letter. This letter, as in the previous letter description, solidifies your commitment to acquiring the particular job for which you interviewed. Again, the more the employer sees your name in a positive way, the more you will be remembered.

As with the previous letter, this letter need not be long or formal. It should be addressed to the interviewer, or the head interviewer if you interviewed with more than one on the same day. The letter should:

- Thank the person for the interview
- Re-emphasize your interest in organization and the position
- Rephrase your background and briefly explain how your experience can compliment the requirements of the job
- Indicate that you intend to follow-up the letter with a telephone call to determine if and when the employer wishes to see you again. This last point should be used with caution as this may not always be appropriate.

If the position for which you interviewed is not the position you really want, consider sending a thank you note anyway indicating that. A letter of this kind projects professionalism and politely helps the employers refocus their energies elsewhere. If, after the interview, you are interested in the organization, but not that particular, send a letter stating just that.

... AFTER RECEIVING A REJECTION LETTER

It is a good idea to write a prospective employer a thank you letter for their consideration of your resume if you receive information that there are no positions available. Remember that job hunting is marketing. The more your name is on the employer's desk, in their ear, or on their lips, *in a positive way*, the more they will potentially remember you once a position becomes available. Furthermore, the "thank you for your consideration" letter will be a testament to your commitment to wanting the job and to your professionalism.

This letter need not be long or formal. The letter should:

- Convey your thanks for the employer's consideration
- Re-emphasize your interest in them and the position

SAMPLE LETTERS

FRANK BLACKMAN

12 Millennium Square Smithville, NY 11754

Fblack@internet.com

(516) 299-2251

Letterhead to match a resume letterhead

February 12, 2002

Dr. Thomas J. Meyer
Assistant Superintendent for Human Resources
Hicksville Public Schools
200 Division Avenue
Hicksville, NY 11801-4899

Answering an ad in a newspaper

Dear Dr. Meyer:

Incorporates research of the organization

In response to last week's advertisement in the New York Times for an English Teacher, I have enclosed my resume for your consideration. I was impressed to learn that more than 90% of your students go on to further their education, which is better than the Nassau County average. I would welcome the opportunity to contribute to a district with such a strong reputation.

I recently graduated from Long Island University with a Bachelor's degree in Secondary Education. I am certified to teach both English and Special Education. In addition to fulfilling my student teaching requirement in the Huntington Union Free School District, I participated in a volunteer literacy program to tutor both youth and adults with reading difficulties. I also organized and performed in a variety show at Huntington High School that benefited special needs students.

I would like to meet with you to discuss how my educational background, skills, and experiences can help meet the needs of Hicksville Public Schools. I look forward to hearing from you soon to schedule an interview appointment. In the meantime, if you have any questions, I may be reached at (516) 299-2251.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Tell about your education and certifications as well as your qualifications and experiences.

Frank Blackman

Frank Blackman

A good way to end a cover letter if you cannot get in touch with the person to whom the letter is written.
This is common in education.

Enclosure

123 Cherry Lane
Sommerset, NY 12345

March 20, 2002

Instead of a letterhead

Ms. Virginia Cole
Manager of Employment
Smith, Roberts, Mitchell and Morelli, LLP
3M Building
100 Centre Street
Wappingers Falls, NY 12345

Incorporates the writer's research on the company

Dear Ms. Cole:

In researching some of the local public accounting firms, your firm was continually mentioned to me as one of the most admired. I can only surmise that this has something to do with the caliber of people on your staff. I am writing to you today because I would like to be part of an accounting team that prides itself on professional excellence.

This May, I will graduate from the C.W. Post Campus of Long Island University with a Bachelor's degree in accounting. I am seeking an auditing position as my career goals include becoming a Certified Public Accountant. My background includes experience in the areas of accounts receivable, accounts payable, budgeting, invoicing, purchasing, sales and inventory control. Enclosed is my resume, which further details my work experience.

I want to make you aware that I am paralyzed from the waist down and use a wheelchair. This has posed no problems for me at my other positions. I am able to drive my own car, which is equipped with assistive devices. I am familiar with the 3M building and know that it is wheelchair accessible.

I will call your office on Wednesday, March 30th to inquire about the possibility of interviewing with you. Please do not hesitate to contact me at (516) 235-4567 if you desire any additional information.

Very truly yours,

Stuart Foster

Alerting an employer to an apparent disability is an option

Stuart Foster

Enclosure

A good way to show your assertiveness and desire for the job, and hopefully keep your resume on the employer's desk longer

Samantha Nicole Depardu
54 Green Tree Circle, Southold, NY 11845
(516) 564-5696
depardu@yahoo.com

January 19, 2002

Letterhead to match the resume's
letterhead

Mr. William Smith, Vice President
Apple Bank
333 Sixth Avenue
New York, NY 10010

Incorporating the name of your referral or network
contact

Dear Mr. Smith:

Jack Kennedy suggested I get in touch with you regarding a position at Apple Bank.

I am a financial services marketer at Federal International with experience in product development, merchandising, branch management and distribution planning. Highlighted here are some of my recent accomplishments:

- Created Federal's Investment Portfolio, the bank's first complete presentation of its retail savings and investment products.
- Developed successful ways to sell the 'FedAccount' in the retail setting.
- As area director in the New York retail bank, I doubled branch balances in only three years.

I am interested in a new assignment that would take full advantage of my financial services marketing experience. I have enclosed my resume for your review. I will call in a few days to see if we can set up a time to meet. If you would like to contact me before then, you can reach me at (516) 555-1212.

I am looking forward to meeting you.

Bullets are another way to highlight
your accomplishments

Cordially,

Samantha Nicole Depardu

Samantha Nicole Depardu

Enclosure

34 Cadillac Drive
East Meadow, NY 11556

May 1, 2002

Ms. Roberta Peterson
Department of Special Services
Juneau, AL 99827

Dear Ms. Peterson:

I believe I am a good fit for the juvenile counselor position you advertised in last week's edition of the *Juneau Record*.

During the past year, I have planned and supervised recreational activities for at-risk teens and co-facilitated group counseling sessions with them.

As my resume indicates, my qualifications closely match your requirements. You seek a recent college graduate. I completed my BA in psychology in May. Your ideal candidate will have experience working with high school students. I participated in internships at both Youth Services of Nassau County and the NY Drug Abuse Prevention Association. You seek an outgoing individual who can demonstrate an attention to detail. I was secretary of the C.W. Post senior class as well as a member of several campus organizations.

My salary requirements are negotiable and I do not anticipate encountering a problem in reaching a mutually agreeable figure. It is my understanding that entry-level positions in counseling typically pay in the upper twenties to low thirties in your part of the country.

I would welcome an interview with you to discuss the contributions I could make to your staff as a juvenile counselor. I plan on being in Juneau visiting family during the month of June. I will take the liberty of calling your office next week to see if we can meet during that time. Thank you for your consideration.

Highlight skills and qualifications as they directly relate to position.

Sincerely,

Michael McBride

Michael McBride

Handling a request to divulge your salary requirements

Enc.

THANK YOU LETTER

231 Libson Avenue
Buffalo, New York 14214

January 12, 2002

Mr. Mike Charles, Manager
General Switch Gear
35 South Castle Rock Road
Buffalo, New York 14260

A thank you for the interview

Dear Mr. Charles:

It was a pleasure to meet and talk with you on Tuesday morning. I appreciate the frank discussion we had about the company and the position.

I have given considerable thought to the problems you described and feel certain that I can produce the results you want in a short time period. My experience in production and design will be extremely valuable in this respect. The broad exposure I gained while assembling and designing relays, starters, motors, and control panels has enabled me to solve many problems requiring adaptations of standard products.

I am extremely interested in the job and convinced that this is just the opportunity I have been seeking. I plan to call you on Thursday afternoon to find out if a decision has been made regarding my candidacy. Again, thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Re-emphasis of the candidate's interest in the company and in the position

B. H. Lim

Re-emphasis of the candidate's skills and how they may fit the goals of the company

B.H. Lim

Probably appropriate in this case, the candidate informs of a follow-up

Notice alternative format for the letter.

8 Harrison Street
Port Jefferson, NY 11857
May 24, 2002

Mr. Frank Kaufman
Manager, Human Resources
Bitterman's, Inc.
New York, NY 10005

The candidate writing this letter received notification that he does not qualify for the position for which he applied. He thanks the interviewer and suggests consideration for a position for which he is more qualified.

Dear Mr. Kaufman:

Thank you for your prompt response to my resume and letter of inquiry regarding a marketing position with Bitterman's. The information you shared about your organization's structure and the types of people you currently seek made a lot of sense to me.

While I do not have the credentials you seek in a marketing professional, I hope I can convince you to consider me for one of the sales positions you mentioned. In that regard, I think I can contribute substantially given my interest in marketing and my prior customer service experience.

In the hopes that you will reconsider me in a sales capacity, I will take the liberty of calling your office next week to see if we can discuss this further.

Thank you again for your consideration.

Cordially,

Jeffrey Margolies

Jeffery Margolies