

COVER LETTER TIPS AND SUGGESTIONS

Your cover letter is a potential employer's first impression of you and can be the most vital part of the application packet. A well written letter entices the employer to read your resume. A poorly constructed cover letter may doom your resume to the "No Need to Read" pile. The same can be said for a college or scholarship application that includes an introductory letter. It is important to highlight your skills, knowledge, and experience. These will indicate what you can contribute to the company or school. Effective cover letters must convey a sense of purpose and project enthusiasm. A "form" cover letter rarely does this. Researching the employer, college, or scholarship prior to writing the cover letter will give you the opportunity to effectively personalize your letter.

1. **Always** include a cover letter when mailing your resume. A letter of introduction will prove useful when applying to colleges. It may act as the basis for a college essay or it may be a useful addition to an application packet.
2. Unless the advertisement specifies "no phone calls please" and the name is not given in the ad, find out the name and title of the individual who will be receiving your letter. Make sure you spell the name properly and get the proper abbreviation (Mr., Mrs., Ms.).
3. Do not use "form" letters or photocopies. Personalize each letter. If possible, explain why you want to work for the organization or attend the school.
4. Use a proper business format for your letters.
5. Make sure the letter is **PERFECT!** Spelling, punctuation, and grammar count. Have someone proofread the letter before mailing it.
6. Create the letter on a computer word processing program (Microsoft Word, WordPerfect, etc.) and use a laser printer, if possible. Use good quality paper. Cheap, flimsy paper makes your application seem very ordinary. However, do not use flashy colors!
7. Utilize a one inch margin on all 4 sides. This white space draws the reader to the body of the letter.
8. In the opening paragraph, tell the reader the purpose of the letter.
9. Use "I" statements and action verbs when describing your experience.
10. Get to the point! Employers do not have the time to read lengthy letters. A cover letter should never exceed one page.
11. Focus on the specific skills and interests you possess that you can offer the employer or college. Concentrate on skills which match the advertised employment qualifications or the desired program of study. Stress what you can do for the company or college, not what the company or college can do for you. Sound upbeat and confident. Sell yourself!
12. Don't mention salary expectations unless the advertisement specifically requests it. In that case, the best strategy is to give a range. For example, "My earnings have ranged from \$7.00 to \$10.50 per hour in the various sales positions I have held."
13. End by thanking the reader and stating that you look forward to meeting with them. Make a specific suggestion for the next step of the process and follow up as promised.

Before mailing a cover letter, can you answer the following questions with a "Yes"?

- Is it clear? Does it state exactly what I want it to state?
- Is it concise? Does it state what I want it to state in the fewest possible words?
- Is it well organized?
- Am I projecting to the employer or college the contribution I can make?
- Have I stressed areas in my experience and/or education that are relevant to the person reading it?

COVER LETTER GUIDE

PARTS OF A COVER LETTER	SAMPLE LETTER
HEADING	Your Mailing Address City, State Zip Code Today's Date (4 "Return"s or "Enter"s on Keyboard)
INSIDE ADDRESS	Employer's Name Job Title Business Name Business Address City, State Zip Code
SALUTATION	Dear (Mr./Mrs./Ms.) (Use the name of the person that will read the letter):
INTRODUCTORY PARAGRAPH Tell why you are writing.	In response to the February 24th advertisement in the <i>Bangor Daily News</i> , I have enclosed my resume for the Receptionist position.
1ST MAIN PARAGRAPH Describe your qualifications. Sell your skills and knowledge. Tell why you are interested in the company or college. Point out any related experience you have.	I have two years of prior work experience as a receptionist with XYZ Telecommunications. My work has involved answering ten incoming lines and greeting customers in a fast-paced office setting. I have also been responsible for all incoming and outgoing mail, as well as purchase orders. I am very detail oriented and able to handle multiple tasks simultaneously.
2ND MAIN PARAGRAPH Continue to describe qualifications. Highlight relevant training or classes that relate to the job or major for which you are applying.	I am currently completing an Associate Degree in Executive Administrative Assistant at Northern Maine Technical College. In completing this program, I have gained valuable experience in several computer programs including Microsoft Word, Excel, and Access. Additionally, my training has provided me with the skills to reach my goal of office management.
CLOSING PARAGRAPH Close by thanking the reader and requesting an interview.	I welcome the opportunity to discuss my qualifications with you in person. I can be reached at (207) 555-1234. Thank you for your time and consideration.
COMPLIMENTARY CLOSE	Sincerely,
SIGNATURE	(4 "Return"s or "Enter"s on Keyboard)
NAME	Joe Doe
ENCLOSURE This indicates that you have enclosed other items (resume, transcripts, etc.) for the reader to see.	Enclosure

SAMPLE COVER LETTER #1

5 Atkins Avenue
Northville, ME 04400
January 3, 2003

Ms. Christine Bailey
XYZ Law Offices
123 Main Street
Auburn, ME 04210

Dear Ms. Bailey:

This letter is in reference to the paralegal position that was listed through Central Maine Technical College's Career Center. I am familiar with XYZ Law Office's recent growth and I am confident that my skills and qualifications will benefit your company.

I am eager to utilize my research and writing skills while working as a paralegal. My academic courses at CMTC have required many research papers and projects. I have a tremendous capacity to undertake research and report findings in clear and concise fashion.

I work well under the pressure of deadlines, and I have been involved in many group projects. My work experiences have taught me that one must be prepared to work beyond the typical forty-hour week to achieve success. I am willing and able to do so for XYZ Law Offices.

Your consideration of my credentials would be greatly appreciated. I will call you next week to confirm your receipt of this letter and enclosed resume. Please feel free to contact me if you require additional information to support my candidacy.

Sincerely,

Signature

Joseph Smith

Enclosures