

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, Province Postal Code
Today's Date

(4 "Return"s or "Enter"s on Keyboard)

INSIDE ADDRESS

Employer's Name
Job Title
Business Name
Business Address
City, Province Postal 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 Saanich Daily News, 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 University Transfer Business Education Certificate from Camosun 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 (555) 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

60 Treeline Drive
Saanichton, BC V8X 2T5
(207) 555-9335
June 9, 2011

Ms. Jean Quimby
Personnel Manager
Campbell's Soup
65 Cedar Grove Ave.
Victoria, BC V8Y 3C4

Dear Ms. Quimby:

A mutual friend, Troy McClure, mentioned to me that you may soon be looking for an individual in your Customer Relations Department. Please consider this my application for a position at Campbell's Soup Limited. I have two years experience as an Administrative Assistant, working with senior staff in the Customer Relations department.

I am a well-organized, highly motivated individual who enjoys the challenges of working in a fast-paced office environment. I have strong communication and computer skills, including a working knowledge of Microsoft Office, specifically with Microsoft Word as well as Microsoft Excel. I also have experience in dealing successfully with a variety of customers.

Enclosed is my resume for your consideration. I will call you in a week to further discuss this position and to arrange a time that we can discuss my resume in further detail. I can be reached at the above number day or evening. Thank you very much for your time and consideration.

Sincerely

Signature

Maude Flanders

Enclosure