

The Cover Letter

“Your cover letter has a life expectancy of about eight seconds, so it must be brief, yet informative.”

Drake University Professional & Career Development Services • 2507 University Avenue • Des Moines, IA 50311 • www.drake.edu/career

FORMULATING THE COVER LETTER from EEO bimonthly magazine

There are two types of cover letters — those that draw the reader in and entice him or her to read your résumé, and those that eliminate you from the running before your résumé gets read.

The cover letter serves as the introduction to your résumé. No résumé should ever be sent without one. The cover letter should be revised for each position for which you express interest. Your career objective should be included in the cover letter. By including it in the cover letter, you can tailor the objective to the advertisement to which you are responding or to the “hot tip” you received through your professional network.

Studies indicate that your cover letter has a life expectancy of about eight seconds, so it must be brief, yet informative. The letter should have three recognizable parts: the opening, which explains why you are writing (“I’m responding to your advertisement...”); the main body, which demonstrates competencies you have achieved through two or three of your major accomplishments and gives the reader good reason to interview you; and the closing, which expresses a desire for future communication. Be sure your letter draws a connection between the needs of the current job opening and the skills you can bring to the job.

While the experience of the applicants in the samples on the next pages is undoubtedly

different from your own, you can adapt the format shown here to suit your individual career search needs. Notice they all share the following attributes:

- They’re written in a business letter format and have a neat, professional look.
- The first paragraph of each letter explains the purpose and generates interest, frequently by using a name.
- The body of each letter focuses on what the writer can offer and not what the writer wants.
- The style of the letter is conversational but still business-like. You don’t need to use a lot of jargon or cumbersome sentences.

SAMPLE COVER LETTERS

General Outline for a Cover Letter

- Use complete title and address.
- If possible, address it to a particular person by name.
- Be careful to use Mr., Ms. or Dr. If a name is not available, address it to an appropriate title within the organization, such as Human Resources Manager, Hiring Manager or Department Manager. **Do not address the letter Dear Sir.**
- Make the addressee want to read your résumé. Be personable and be enthusiastic.
- The top and bottom margins should be equal.
- Always sign letters above your typed name.
- If a résumé or other enclosure is included, note in letter.

Your Name

Mailing Address • City, State Zip Code • Telephone Number(s) • E-mail Address

Date of Letter

Employer’s Name and Title
Company
Employer’s Mailing Address
City, State Zip Code

Salutation:

Opening Paragraph: State why you are writing, name the position or type of work for which you are applying, and mention how you heard of the opening or organization. Explain why you are interested in working for this employer.

Middle Paragraph(s): Specify your reasons for desiring this type of work. If you have had relevant work experience or related education, be sure to point it out, but do not reiterate your entire résumé. Emphasize skills or abilities you have that relate to the job for which you are applying.

Be sure to do this in a confident manner. Remember also that the reader will view your letter of application as an example of your writing skills. This paragraph(s) is designed to entice the reader to look beyond the letter to your résumé.

Closing Paragraph: You may refer the reader to your enclosed résumé (which gives a summary of your qualifications) or whatever media you’re using to illustrate your training, interests and experience. Have an appropriate closing to pave the way for the interview by indicating the action or steps you will take to initiate an interview date. (For example, I can be reached at the phone number above to arrange an interview or I will contact you soon.)

Sincerely,

(Signature)

Applicant’s Name Typed

Enclosure

SAMPLE COVER LETTERS

Letter for entry-level position/first-time job seeker

Amy Schoenfeld

15 Avalon Drive • Brooklyn, NY 55555 • 555-555-5555 • amyschoenf@something.com

August 15, 2009

Ms. Joan Sampson
Vice President
ABC, Inc.
2301 Walnut Grove Lane
St. Louis, MO 27555

Dear Ms. Sampson:

I am seeking a position in journalism with a high quality publisher where I can utilize my writing skills. In speaking with Sue Anderson, she suggested I contact you directly to learn more about editing positions with ABC, Inc.

As you will note from the enclosed resume, I have majored in magazines in the School of Journalism and Mass Communication at Drake University. As an editor of *Drake Magazine* I have extensive editorial, proofreading, layout and design experience. My education and extracurricular activities have taught me the importance of teamwork in meeting critical production deadlines. I take pride in being organized, handle pressure well, enjoy collaborating with a variety of people, and have great enthusiasm for my work and studies.

I would like to learn more about entry-level editing positions at ABC, Inc. I will follow up with you next week to discuss my qualifications or to answer any questions you might have. Thank you in advance for your assistance.

Sincerely,

Amy Schoenfeld

Amy Schoenfeld

Enclosure

- Identify objective.
- Refer to résumé and point out qualifications and special interests.
- Suggest a course of action for an interview.

Letter for experienced job seeker

Cory Lawrence

5 Clove Road • Staten Island, NY 55555 • 555-555-5050 • E-mail: CoryL@yahoo.com

March 27, 2009

Richard Patterson
Section Manager
Webber Corporation
16399 W. Bernardo Drive
San Diego, CA 92717

Dear Mr. Patterson:

I would like to apply for the position of marketing representative at your San Diego facility as advertised in the Sunday, March 24, issue of the *San Diego Journal*.

At XYZ Company, we use a number of your products, and as a laboratory scientist here, I have become very familiar with their design, precision and reliability. Your upcoming project of applying microcomputers in automatic control systems interests me a great deal and, as the enclosed résumé states, fits well with my background.

I would appreciate the opportunity to discuss how my education and experience are consistent with your needs. Please take the time to review my qualifications, and I will contact you within two weeks to talk about the possibility of arranging an interview. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Cory Lawrence

Cory Lawrence

Enclosure

Drake
UNIVERSITY