



Cover Letter Guide

OFFICE OF CAREER SERVICES

WHAT IT IS

A cover letter is a way of introducing yourself to a prospective employer. It serves three basic purposes. An effective cover letter is a:

- LETTER OF TRANSMITTAL — it accompanies your resume to a prospective employer.
- LETTER OF INTRODUCTION — it introduces you and your background to the employer. It lets the employer know a little bit about you and what position you are applying for.
- SALES LETTER — it gives you an opportunity to sell yourself to an employer. An effective cover letter will convince the employer to turn the page and read your resume.

ALWAYS include a cover letter when you mail or fax your resume to a prospective employer. You do not need a cover letter when you personally hand a resume to someone, but it never hurts to have one handy just in case.

Some Tips!

A cover letter should always be **no longer than one single page**. Make it brief, but informative.

Use a **separate cover** letter for each employer. Do not merely change the names. Employers can spot a generic letter a long way off.

Structure the cover letter with an **opening** explaining why you are writing; a **main body** that lists two or three of your major accomplishments; and a **closing** which expresses a desire for future communication.

Always address your letter to the **person who could hire** you. Never write “to whom it may concern,” “sir” or “madam.” You can obtain this information by calling a secretary or receptionist. *Make certain the name is spelled correctly!*

Show that you know a little about their company and are interested in them. Mention current activities, problems, interests or priorities involving the company that you are aware of.

Write with **enthusiasm** and **interest** regarding the possibility of working with this employer. Project **warmth** and **friendliness**.

It has been said, “He that tooteth not his own horn is not tooted.” Without being arrogant, **confidently** lay out your qualifications, skills and value to this employer.

Try to mention one thing about you that is **unique**. Set yourself apart from the crowd!

This is a good place to **expand** on experience or abilities that cannot easily be described on your resume.

The cover letter is an example of your writing style and ability. Make sure it represents your **best efforts**.

Whether there is a position available at the moment or not, you want to a **face to face meeting** with them. Say in your letter that you would like a short meeting to introduce yourself and get to know more about their organization.

Close the cover letter by letting the employer know that **you will be in contacting them** in the future. Don't say, "I hope to hear from you soon." There's no guarantee that you will.

Spell check your letter and have several other people **proof-read** it for form and content. It must be **perfect** and **error free**.

A SAMPLE COVER LETTER FORMAT

Your name
Your street address
Your City, STATE, ZipCode
(Area) Phone Number Email Address

Date

Mr. John Employer
Title
Organization Name
Street Address
City, State, Zip Code

Dear Mr. Employer:

Opening Paragraph. Tell why you are writing, the name of the position or the kind of work for which you are applying and how you heard of the company (or the position opening, if appropriate). If someone in the company has recommended you or told you about the position, mention their name here.

Main Body. Refer to things you know about the position and the employer. Identify the exact needs they have and what they are looking for in the ideal candidate. State the skills you have that would meet their needs. Briefly give specific examples from your experience and/or education that support your value to them. Do not refer the reader to your resume; they'll see it when they turn the page. Instead, highlight here the best of what you have to offer them.

Closing Paragraph. State the action that you will next take to initiate a face to face contact.

Sincerely,

[signature]

Your name typed

Enclosure [This means that your resume is enclosed, not 'attached.']

[See examples of a few cover letters on the next pages.]

Thomas Collegian
123 Acorn Street
Simi Valley, CA 91456
(805) 987-6543 CollegianTM@email.com

May 12, 2004

Ms. Jane Jones
Operations Manager
First Mutual Bank of the Valley
12578 Magnolia Boulevard
Van Nuys, CA 91609

Dear Ms. Jones:

Having completed my undergraduate work at The Master's College with a major in Business Management, I am seeking employment at a local firm where I can apply my skills and knowledge. I have read with great interest your announcement on JobTrak for a Financial Analyst. I would very much appreciate consideration for the position.

In addition to my training in management, I undertook a minor emphasis in computer sciences. I have a keen interest in economics and statistical research, and completed a major research project as part of my course material. My recent part time work as a financial assistant has prepared me for a career in the banking industry.

I am aware that First Mutual Bank anticipates significant growth in the southern California area in coming years. I am interested in working in this area, although I am willing to relocate for a challenging position.

I will contact your office during the week of May 21 to arrange an interview. I can be reached at the number above anytime.

Sincerely,

Thomas Collegian

Enclosure

Wanda Winsome
942 Hillside Drive
Rancho Viejo, CA 95429
(714) 234-5678

May 14, 2003

Ms. Alora Whetherington
Director of Human Resources
Sparkle Publishing Company
459 Wilshire Boulevard
Los Angeles, CA 90068

Dear Ms. Whetherington:

As a recent graduate of The Master's College with a major in English, I am seeking employment with a publishing company with a bright, challenging future. I learned of your corporation through Dr. Charles Boone, who suggested I inquire through your office.

In addition to my formal training in English, I have two years experience as copy editor and feature writer on my college newspaper. I have sought summer employment with companies that have added to my graphic arts and design experience. I am familiar with Microsoft Office as well as other desktop publishing software.

I am excited about the possibility of putting my skills and knowledge to use in a firm such as yours. Sparkle Publishing has an excellent reputation among those in the English Department at The Master's College.

I will contact your office soon to discuss the possibility of an interview, or I may be reached at the number shown on my resume.

Sincerely,

Wanda Winsome

Enclosure

Pamela Person
21726 Placerita Canyon Road, #999
Santa Clarita, CA 91321
(661) 123-4567 PersonP@mymail.com

April 30, 2003

Coordinator of Personnel
938 Missouri Boulevard
Oakland, CA 94606

I am excited to learn of the opening for the position of Special Education Instructor at your school.

On my enclosed resume I have outlined my professional and educational background, giving special emphasis to those skills and accomplishments that address your school's stated needs and requirements.

I have achieved a reputation as a hard-worker, a person of great patience and endurance. I am particularly adept at dealing with situations that most people find too difficult or overwhelming to approach. In both my education and my experience I have a strong record of success.

I would welcome the opportunity to meet with you to share my background, and my thoughts for a career in special education. I will call later this week to see when I can arrange an appointment.

Sincerely,

Pamela Person

Enclosure

Ima Recent Grad
1359 Main Street
Anytown, CA 91234
(213) 456-7890 ImaGrad@masters.edu

May 1, 2004

Jaime Perez
Director of Operations
Computer Innovations
2200 University Avenue
San Francisco, CA 97654

Dear Mr. Perez:

I am eager to introduce myself as a potential employee of Computer Innovations.

I have been an enthusiastic and loyal follower of your company for more than ten years. I admire both the creativity and technical skill of your development staff. I would love add my own talents to your company.

I am a creative and dynamic person myself, with twelve years of experience with computer design. I am completing my formal education at The Master's College in Santa Clarita, where I have had extensive experience with website design and hardware interfacing. I am confident that my abilities will fit well with the direction and requirements of your company.

I will be in San Francisco shortly, and I will follow up this letter with a call to your office to arrange a meeting. In the meantime, if you wish to call me I can be reached at the number above.

Sincerely,

Ima Recent Grad

Enclosure

References should be listed on a separate page, using paper identical to that used for the resume and cover letter. List approximately 3 professional and 1 personal references, either centered, left-justified or 2-columns. You may wish to identify the nature of the relationship along with their name and contact information.

REFERENCES

Dr. John Smith, Chair
Department of Communication
The Master's College
21726 Placerita Canyon Road
Santa Clarita, CA 91321
(661) 259-3540 extension 102

Ms. Mable Wasburn, Owner
The Apple's Eye Restaurant
1234 Coyote Drive
Canyon Country, CA 91380
(661) 555-1212

Professor John P. Holland
The Master's College
21726 Placerita Canyon Road
Santa Clarita, CA 91321
(661) 259-3540 extension 247

Mr. Albert P. Phiney (long time friend and mentor)
245 Graphite Street
Penumbra, CA 99991
(842) 555-1212