



Cover Letters

Types of job search letters

Application letter/cover letter

- Used to get your resume read/reviewed and to generate interviews
- Used in response to specific job advertisements and vacancy announcements
- Demonstrates that your qualifications fit the requirements of the position
- Links major job dimensions with your related past experience and performance
- Shows you have done your homework on the position/organization
- Demonstrates you have the ability to write well.

Prospecting letter

- Similar to the application letter, but instead of using position information, focuses on broader occupational and/or organization dimensions to describe how your qualifications match the work environment
- Used to seek out possible vacancies in your occupation
- Used to get your resume read/reviewed and to generate interviews

Networking letter

- Designed to generate informational interviews—not job interviews
- Used to meet individuals who can give you specific information about your intended career field

Thank-you letter

This is one of the most important, yet least-used, tools in a job search.

- Used to establish goodwill, express appreciation, and/or to strengthen your candidacy (you may want to reiterate a point, or mention something you forgot during the interview)
- Everyone who helps you in any way gets a thank-you letter (don't forget "informational interviewers" and your references)

Acceptance letter

- Confirms the terms of your employment (salary, starting date, etc.)
- Positively reinforces the employer's decision to hire you

Withdrawal letter

Once you accept a position, you have an ethical obligation to inform all other potential employers of your decision

- Used to withdraw your employment application from consideration
- Expresses appreciation for the employer's consideration and courtesy

Rejection letter

Employers aren't the only ones to send rejections. You may decline employment offers that do not fit your career objectives or interests, but do so diplomatically. You might want a job with this employer at some point in the future!

- Indicates you have carefully considered the offer and have decided not to accept it—you do not need to provide a specific reason
- Thank the employer for the offer and for considering you as a candidate

Letter styles

Block style

- The most common choice; easiest to set up
- All text is set at the left margin of the paper
- Single-space writing; double-space between paragraphs

Semi-block style

- Body of letter, salutation, and recipient's name/address tabbed at the left margin of the paper
- Single-space writing; indent and double-space between paragraphs
- Return address, date, closing, and signature line are a little right of the center of the page

Modified block style

- Body of letter, salutation, and recipient's name/address tabbed at the left margin of the paper
- Single-space writing; double-space between paragraphs
- Return address, date, closing, and signature line are a little right of the center of the page

Recommendations

Things to DO

- Type each letter individually
- Proofread
- Address the employing official by name and, if possible, by title
- Use power words to relate your accomplishments
- Keep to one page, use 1" to 1 1/2" margins
- Expand on your resume
- Provide examples of skills, top qualities
- Be honest and sincere; give the impression of modest confidence
- Do not overuse the personal pronoun "I"
- Proofread again
- Use an easy-to-read font, no smaller than 10 pt
- Use white or off-white paper to match your resume

Things NOT to do

- Simply repeat what is in your resume
- Use a reproduced form letter or pre-printed letter
- Be too formal (stilted) or too casual
- Use stereotyped, trite phrases; write naturally and sincerely
- Use company stationery
- Boast
- Fail to proof read!
- Also: Don't always default to "Times New Roman"—other fonts get the job done too, such as Arial or Verdana. (However, these fonts could raise some spacing or sizing issues. Font must be compatible with electronic formatting requirements.)

Sample letter information

Present Address
City, State, Zip
Home Telephone (optional)
Work Telephone (optional)
E-mail (optional)

Date

Name (specific), Title
Organization
Street Address
City, State, Zip

Dear Ms./Mr. ____: Never use “Dear Sir/Madam.” Always try to find the name of a specific contact person. Simply call the organization and ask who is in charge of hiring or who supervises the particular department. Get the correct spelling of the individual’s name.

First paragraph: Why you are writing. Are you applying for a specific position or want to know if specific types of positions are, or will be, available? Mention how you learned about the position or organization. If referred by a faculty member, relative, or employee, note his or her name here.

Second and consecutive paragraphs: Why you are interested in and qualified for the position and/or organization. Avoid lengthy paragraphs of more than five or six lines. Keep your sentences simple (but vary your sentence style!) and to the point.

Outline your qualifications, strengths, accomplishments, and the benefits you can offer the organization. If you are applying for a specific position, identify key words/phrases in the job description and relate your skills to what they are looking for. (For example, if the position requires good customer-service skills: “I have had more than four years of experience in customer service and was selected to train several new employees on...”) You may want to refer to your resume in this or the last paragraph.

Last paragraph: Close asking for a response. It may be as simple as “I look forward to hearing from you” to a more assertive approach such as “I will be contacting you within the next two weeks to inquire about setting up a time to meet and discuss my qualifications for this position.” You might repeat your contact information.

Sincerely,

(Four spaces to sign your name)

Type your name

Enclosure (signals you have included your resume)

Sample letter of application

555 XYZ Drive
Your Town, IL 6XXXX
(555) 123-5550
psmith@IllinoisState.edu

February 7, 2XXX

Ms. Sophie Jones
Manager of Human Resources
Beck's Public Relations Inc.
1234 State Street
Chicago, IL 60600

Dear Ms. Jones:

I am writing to apply for the position of Human Resources Assistant in your Training and Development Office. I found this position in the Illinois State University Career Center online eRecruiting listings. Based on the job description, the position appears ideally suited to my education, experience, and career interests.

My education in human resources and my recent internship at the ABC Publishing House have provided me with the experience and confidence to succeed in training and development. I noted in the job description you are looking for a professional with experience in technical writing. My time at ABC was spent developing the Web-based training manual for the professional staff to use when training new employees on customer service. ABC was recently awarded the coveted "City of Chicago Customer Service Company of the Year" by the Chicago Chamber of Commerce. I am very pleased to have been a part of that effort.

Having reviewed Beck's Web site, I am particularly impressed by the company's philosophy of "dedication to professional excellence through continued professional education." I agree wholeheartedly and would look forward to my own continuing professional development within the organization. I have enclosed my resume, which will give you additional information about my work experiences in human resources, plus my educational background.

Thank you for considering me as a candidate for this position. I have already arranged for you to receive a copy of my university transcripts (as directed in the job announcement) and I eagerly anticipate hearing from you in the near future about the prospect of an interview.

Sincerely,

Pat Smith

Enclosure