

Employment Letters

Amica Center for Career Education

BRYANT UNIVERSITY

www.bryant.edu/career

Employment Letters

COVER LETTERS

The cover letter is a vital tool in a successful job search. Cover letters are introductory sales letters to potential employers, and they usually accompany resumes. Always use a cover letter unless you are hand delivering your resume to a prospective employer, or you are applying to a position on BCC that asks only for your resume. Your task in finding a job is to differentiate yourself from every other candidate. A good cover letter can do this by motivating the potential employer to read the attached resume and thus invite you to interview for the position you are seeking.

Employers receive hundreds of resumes daily and can only interview a small number of candidates. Thus, the cover letter becomes the first screening process. Only a few carefully worded letters stand a good chance of getting through an employer's screening maze. A good cover letter introduces you to an employer, explains why you are one of the best candidates applying for a job with the organization, and increases your chances of getting an interview.

While it is often tempting to prepare a general or generic cover letter and send it to many potential employers, this approach is ineffective. Take the time to personalize each letter by researching the company and considering the skills necessary to perform the desired position. Then match your strengths to the requirements of the job and show evidence of your understanding of the position and company. This strategy will set your letter apart from others received and will optimally raise your chances for an interview.

The cover letter should not repeat the data on your resume but should interpret it! This is your opportunity to showcase a few select achievements in more detail than the resume allows. It also provides an opportunity to add personal flavor to your approach. Although you want your letter to reflect your personality, always keep in mind the audience (and industry) to whom you are writing. If you are creative and want to try a "catchy" first sentence, that might be very appropriate for a position requiring imagination or creativity. However, the banking industry, for example, is more conservative. Try to solicit feedback on your letter's effectiveness from someone in the appropriate industry or from a member of the Career Center staff.

COVER LETTER BASICS

- Prepare in proper business format on 8 1/2 x 11 bond paper (20lb. to 24lb.) that matches your resume. Matching envelopes are also available.
- Address each employer by name and title. No one likes to receive or respond to "Dear Sir/Madam" or "To Whom it May Concern" ...it's too impersonal.
- Be sure to check for grammatical and typographical errors!
- A one page letter is usually sufficient. Two pages can be used if necessary.
- The body of your letter should include facts and tangible details about your past experience in addition to stressing your accomplishments and how your skills match the position.
- Show that you have knowledge of the company and the job requirements.
- You may state some kind of plan of action in your closing such as: "You may call me at...." or "I will call you in two weeks to hopefully set up an appointment". This optional type of closing gives the employer a sense of your confidence and shows you are willing to take initiative to reach your goals. Be sure to follow through on any action you tell an employer you plan to take.

CONTENT OF A COVER LETTER

First Paragraph

Aside from the obvious purpose of introducing yourself and how you heard of the position you are applying to, the purpose of this opening paragraph is to arouse the reader's interest in a business-like manner. Examples of ways this can be achieved include:

- 1.) Naming a person who told you of the position
- 2.) Asking a question
- 3.) Summarizing 2 or 3 of your outstanding qualifications
- 4.) Reviewing the prerequisites of the job and showing you possess them.
- 5.) Showing an understanding of the company's operations
- 6.) Stressing a need the reader has--one that you can fill
- 7.) Making a statement with which the reader will agree

Second Paragraph

This paragraph should create interest on the part of your reader. This can be achieved by selecting two or three strong points from your resume and interpreting them. Explain how your strengths make you a good applicant for the position for which you are applying. Refer to position requirements from a job posting when possible to show a good match between yourself and the position. You may also mention personal characteristics that you feel would be assets to the position.

Third Paragraph

A third paragraph should include your knowledge of the company based on your research and why you want to work for them specifically.

Closing Paragraph

In the closing paragraph you want to indicate your desire to obtain an interview. Also, include your contact information unless your cover letter has the same heading as your resume. Express gratitude to the employer for reviewing your application.

The above information provides suggestions on how you might construct your cover letter. Feel free to place information in different areas of the cover letter to best express yourself and make your letter uniquely yours.

THANK YOU LETTER

Writing a thank you letter is one of the most essential steps in the job-seeking process. It should be sent immediately after the interview and to the person(s) who interviewed you. Be certain that your letter sounds sincere and conveys enthusiasm. A "fresh" thank you letter can really impress an interviewer.

The contents of an effective thank you letter should include:

First Paragraph: Simply and sincerely say "thank you" to the interviewer and/or convey your appreciation. Mention the position and the date you were interviewed.

Second Paragraph: The purpose of this paragraph may be to:

- 1.) Emphasize the interest you have in obtaining the position
- 2.) Present any point that you did not make during the interview or that you think is important.
- 3.) Briefly restate your key credentials

Third Paragraph: In the closing paragraph, state that you will be eagerly waiting to hear from them.

THANK YOU LETTER BY EMAIL

Many recruiters see sending a thank you letter by e-mail very appropriate, especially if they have used e-mail as a regular way to correspond with you during the interview process or have given you their e-mail address and expressed that it would be appropriate to communicate with them that way.

Be sure to print out your e-mail letter and proofread carefully prior to sending. Your format will include your salutation, the body of the letter and your complementary closing. Always send a letter through the mail if you have any doubt that the recruiter would be receptive to an e-mailed thank you.

A handwritten note is also appropriate provided you have excellent handwriting.

LETTERS DECLINING OR ACCEPTING OFFERS

Let the prospective employer know your final decision. Remember that the employer's staffing plans will be pending on your decision. If you decline an offer, other candidates must be sought.

Do not accept an offer unless you are certain it is what you want. Once you accept, you should not continue interviewing with other companies. To accept an offer and later decline for something else reflects very poorly on you, personally and professionally. Recruiters count on your commitment to ensure they have met their hiring needs. By declining an offer after accepting, not only do you put a recruiter in the difficult spot of being past the timeframe to call in an alternate, but you also cause peers to miss opportunities that may have been appropriate for them had you declined in time for the recruiter to interview other interested candidates. A compromise would be to ask the employer for more time if you are being asked to make a decision on an offer that you are not ready to commit to.

Contents of a letter **DECLINING** an offer should include:

First Paragraph: A sincere sounding thank you or conveyance of appreciation for the job offer.

Second Paragraph: A statement explaining that you have decided to accept another position or are declining their offer and perhaps a reason for your decision--for example, geographic location, training program, or less travel. Try to use as few negative words as possible while still making it clear that you will not be joining the company.

Closing Paragraph: Strive to develop a positive goodwill closing. You obviously made a strong first impression and you want to end your relationship on the same note!

Contents of a letter **ACCEPTING** an offer are always easy to write because you are conveying good news. Consider the following guidelines.

First Paragraph: Tell of your pleasure to receive the offer and to accept. Also, state the title of the position.

Second Paragraph: Several details could be included:

- 1.) State the beginning date of employment and starting salary
- 2.) Ask any questions you may have
- 3.) Supply them with any information they have requested

Closing Paragraph: Incorporate a goodwill closing -- for example, you may state that you are looking forward to joining their organization.

SAMPLE COVER LETTER FORMAT

Use your resume heading as the heading for your cover letter

Jessica Brown

112 Mandy Street
Providence, RI 02917
jbn@email.com
401-555-5555

April 30, 2012

Ms. Carrie Franks, Recruiter
XYZ Company
Providence, RI 02917

Dear Ms. Franks:

This first paragraph can be a very basic introduction of “**who you are and why you’re writing**”. It can also include the name of a person who suggested you apply to the position, as well as some creative openings such as using a question or quote (depending on the industry and position you are applying to).

A typical second paragraph includes “**what’s great about you**”. This can be highlights from your resume, related experience not on your resume or personal characteristics you feel would be assets to the position. Be sure to tailor this part of the letter to the job description so you are making a case for how you match the company’s needs.

A third paragraph covering “**what’s great about the company**” can personalize your letter and build rapport with a recruiter. Consider the research you have done on the company and how, based on that research, you know you are a good fit for the company. Try to do research beyond the website in order to stand out.

Close the letter by **thanking the recruiter** for their time and **suggesting a meeting** in order to discuss your qualifications in greater detail. Express that you may be reached at the **contact information** at the top of your letter.

Respectfully, (or other closing)

Your Signature (if sending hard copy)

Jane Doe

Enclosure: resume, 1 page **or**
Attached: resume, 1 page

24 HOUR EMPLOYMENT LETTER CRITIQUE SERVICE

Drop off your letters for a critique by a staff member.
Resumes and letters are critiqued daily and are available after 3pm
the day after you drop off your documents.

SAMPLE LETTER FORMATS

Our Career Resource Library has several books containing examples of cover letters and other types of employment letters. Feel free to sign out a book to assist you in choosing an appropriate format for your letter.

COVER LETTER WRITING LABS

Sign up on the BCC Calendar for a Cover Letter Writing Lab.
You will leave with a draft of a
cover letter. Labs are limited to 8 students.

ONLINE RESOURCES FOR COVER LETTERS

www.myfuture.com/toolbox/coverletter_all.html
www.quintcareers.com/covres.html