

Letters to Employers

When applying for a job, don't rely solely on your resume. A well-written letter can significantly increase your success in securing a position by allowing you to emphasize which of your skills will match an individual employer's needs.

TYPES OF LETTERS USED IN A JOB SEARCH

☒ COVER LETTER

A cover letter should accompany every resume, whether mailed, faxed, or emailed. It serves to introduce and highlight aspects of your experience and skills that match an employers' interests. A cover letter should stimulate an employer to read your resume and invite you for an interview. Recruiters verify that the most impressive letters are those that indicate a knowledge of their organization and detail the contributions that the candidate could offer.

Do your homework! Researching employers before writing letters will result in more impressive, individually tailored correspondence. Based on your knowledge of the employers, you will also be able to focus your energies on those that interest you the most and eliminate those that look less promising. The success of a mass mailing campaign will pale in comparison to a well-targeted approach to carefully selected organizations. *A cover letter may be written for two basic reasons:*

1. **A LETTER OF APPLICATION** - to respond to a known job opportunity.
2. **A LETTER OF INQUIRY** - to request informational interviews **and** to investigate potential jobs that interest you.

Since only about 20% of job seekers obtain positions through posted

listings, both types of cover letters should become an integral part of your job search strategy. The letter of application will serve you well in following up on a confirmed opening, while the letter of inquiry will provide an excellent method of unearthing unlisted positions and/or making contacts before openings arise.

☒ THANK YOU LETTER

An expression of your appreciation for an employer's time is a matter of courtesy. Surprisingly few job seekers actually follow-up an interview, information session or other job search assistance with a thank you letter. Those that do, not only impress employers with their manners, but take advantage of an opportunity to remind an employer of their contact, keeping their name fresh in that employer's mind.

☒ LETTERS OF ACKNOWLEDGEMENT, ACCEPTANCE AND DECLINE

It is important to put into writing the terms of your employment decisions. When you have received an offer, confirm in writing the date you agreed to reply with a decision. When you have accepted an offer, state your decision in writing along with the terms of acceptance you have agreed on. Even if you decline a job offer, a polite and appreciative letter will maintain the contact you've made, leaving the door open to future opportunities with that organization.

TIPS ON WRITING STYLE

- Cover Letters that demonstrate a focused job interest are the most successful. Employers will be convinced to interview you by how well you prove you have the skills for the job.
- The introductory paragraph of your cover letter should identify the job you seek and your purpose for writing.
- The middle portion of your letter is the "sales pitch." You might include statements that address:
 - A) Why I really want to work for you.
 - B) Why I'm the right choice for the position.
 Both are important, but the bulk of your focus should be on "What I can do for you," rather than "What can you do for me."
- The cover letter should draw attention to your resume without using valuable marketing space to merely repeat it. **The cover letter should expand on important points.**
- Highlight your past success with **EXAMPLES**. Most employers are more impressed by factual statements than philosophical ideas.
- **Refrain from using "I" too often.** Once you have finished your draft, read it out loud to check for overused pronouns and any awkward passages.
- Remember that your letter will be viewed as an **example of your writing skills**. Carefully check for errors in grammar, punctuation, and spelling.

TIPS ON VISUAL PRESENTATION

- Match the font of your resume with that of your cover letter. Although not required, it creates a visually appealing package. Otherwise, print each letter individually on good quality 8 1/2" x 11" bond paper. Photocopies and handwritten letters on notepaper are red lights to employers. Consider buying paper and business envelopes (9 1/2") to match your resume.
- Use proper business correspondence format. Follow either the letter outline on this page, or sample letters in the CEC, for examples.
- Proofread carefully for typing errors.
Your correspondence should be letter perfect!
- Use a one-page format, with a "picture frame" effect, and margins of at least one inch.
- **Make sure you have signed your name, and have spelled the employer's name correctly!**

Sample cover letters are available in the Career Education Center MCB, W-109 and at www.simmons.edu/resources/career

TIPS ON PROFESSIONAL ETIQUETTE

Address each letter to a specific individual.

Keep a copy of everything you write.

Take enough time to write letters you can be proud of. A rush job rarely results in a quality product.

OUTLINE FOR LETTERS TO EMPLOYERS

Business Correspondence Format

Your Street Address
City, State, Zip Code
Date of Letter

Employer's Name and Title
Employer's Organization
Employer's Street Address
City, State, Zip Code

Dear Mr./Ms./Dr. _____: *(Make sure you have the correct spelling)*

IDENTIFICATION: The opening paragraph should state why you are writing. In an application letter, identify the position for which you are applying and mention how you heard of the opening. If you are inquiring about potential openings, indicate the type of jobs you are investigating and why. In a thank you letter, be sure to mention the date and nature of your contact with the employer.

EXPLANATION: The middle paragraph(s) is your chance to sell yourself. Point out the match between your background and the needs/interests of the organization. Use examples from your education and experience to substantiate your claims. Be enthusiastic, and confident in your approach. In a letter of application, emphasize skills that are mentioned in the job description. In a letter of inquiry, you'll need to decide which skills to highlight. In a letter of thanks, briefly reemphasize your strengths, cover an important point you may have missed in the interview or remind the employer of a topic you discussed together.

ACTION: In the final paragraph, wrap up the loose ends through a summary statement or by referring the employer to your resume, then explain what action you will take next. For a letter of application, indicate your desire for an interview. In a letter of inquiry, you might ask for a brief meeting, either face-to-face or a telephone conference. Put yourself in the position of control by suggesting that within ten days to two weeks you will phone to make arrangements. Then you can call at your convenience when you are prepared for the professional contact. During an interview you might ask the employer what the next step in the process would be, so that your closing statement in a thank you letter can follow her/his lead. Finish the letter by thanking the employer for her/his time and consideration.

CLOSING:

Sincerely,

(leave four lines for your signature)

Your named typed

(skip a space)

Enclosure *(if enclosing a resume or other supporting documents)*

The Simmons College Career Education Center

is available to students and alumnae/i throughout their careers. Our services include, but are not limited to, workshops on resume writing, interviewing skills, and networking, self-assessment tools, job search strategies, on-campus recruiting, career fairs, and private consultations.

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