

CORRESPONDENCE

Cover Letter

The primary purpose of the cover letter is to acquaint the prospective employer with your unique talents, experiences, and skills, and to request an interview to discuss employment possibilities. The cover letter should highlight your resume by identifying how you are qualified for the position and the reasons why it will be to the employer's advantage to hire you. It is valuable to state the reasons for your interest in that particular employer and the position.

The cover letter should be as concise and targeted as possible and should usually be limited to one page. If possible, the letter should not be directed to sir, madam, or director of personnel. Find out who is responsible for hiring and direct the letter to that individual. A description of the

important elements to be included in the cover letter follows, along with several examples of cover letters.

Guidelines for Cover Letters

1. Address by name and title of the individual with the power to hire you, if at all possible.
2. Adapt the letter carefully to specific details of the job opportunity.
3. Open with an idea that captures the attention of the prospective employer so that the letter and resume are considered worth reading.
4. Highlight and draw attention to the points in your resume that uniquely qualify you for the position.
5. Close your letter with a request for an interview.
6. Use good quality stationery and have the letter typed in a professional format.
7. Special attention should be given to grammar, spelling, and neatness. The cover letter should represent your very best efforts. It may be beneficial to have a friend, relative, or member of the Career Services staff review your letter prior to sending it to an employer.
8. If you are emailing your cover letter and resume, be sure to maintain the same degree of formality and professionalism you would use in a hard copy letter.

The cover letter should be as concise and targeted as possible and should usually be limited to one page.

Thank-You Letter

After you have had an interview, sending a thank-you letter is a simple matter of courtesy.

1. As soon after the interview as possible, a letter should be sent to express your appreciation for the opportunity to present yourself.
2. Use the letter to express your continued interest in the position and organization. Some details of things which impressed you are a nice way to personalize your letter and convey your interest more convincingly.
3. Supply any additional information that was requested at the time of the visit or interview.
4. It is acceptable to email your thank-you letter. Be sure it retains the degree of professionalism you would have on a hard copy letter.

Other Types of Letters

Letter of Acknowledgement

When an offer is received, special attention should be given to the preparation of your response letter.

1. Upon receipt of an offer, prompt acknowledgement should be transmitted to the prospective employer.
2. Express your appreciation for the offer.
3. Notify the company of the date you expect to make your decision or that you will respond within their time limitations.

When a rejection is received, special consideration should be given to your response. Don't take this rejection letter as a definite NO! A demonstrated interest in the company and respectful letter may lead to further consideration for other positions as they become available.

1. Acknowledge receipt of the letter.
2. Thank the interviewer for considering your application, indicate that you are still interested in a position with the company, and give some specific information to illustrate what you like about the company, position, or both.

Letter Seeking Additional Information

1. Indicate interest in the company and its offer.
2. Ask for the information which you need to be more informed.

Remember to be as specific as possible!

3. Express your appreciation for the cooperation that you receive.

Acceptance Letter of Second Interview or of Job Offer

Be businesslike but also tailor your letter to the specific employer, so you look sincere and genuinely interested in the company and job. Never copy example letters.

1. Write to the person who wrote and/or interviewed you.
2. Thank the person and/or show your enthusiasm for the offer.
3. State what you are accepting.

4. Concisely, yet descriptively, give some details about what has impressed you about the company and/or interview.

See sample at the end of this section.

Rejection Letter

It is courteous to turn down a site visit or job offer graciously.

1. Write to the person who wrote you.
2. Thank her/him for the offer.
3. Briefly state that you are declining and why (don't get too personal).

NEVER copy sample letters, inserting details. If companies get identical letters, they may question who is doing the writing and your sincerity.

WHAT EMPLOYERS WANT YOU TO KNOW ABOUT COVER LETTERS AND OTHER CORRESPONDENCE

(Comments from recruiters who conducted on-campus interviews at Penn State)

- Emailed thank-you letters (and other correspondence) are perfectly acceptable, in fact preferred. I am not in my office enough during the recruiting season to get hard copy letters, so email is the fastest and most reliable way to reach me.
- Writing compelling e-mails/cover letters compliments a resume beautifully. The resumes are too uniform. Students should be writing resumes and cover letters tailored toward the job they are applying for.
- Include evidence in the body of the cover letter which indicates you have researched our company and the types of jobs we offer.
- A cover letter should clearly state why the applicant is interested in our company and the position.

Sample Cover Letters

Cover Letter Template

Your present address
City, State, ZIP
Date

Person's Name
Title
Company
Address

Dear Ms. Jones:

FIRST PARAGRAPH:

Attract the employer's interest by briefly touching on your specific interest in the company and/or position. If you have been referred by someone, here is where you mention it. Avoid such stereotypical, overused first sentences as "This is in answer to your advertisement," or "I am a senior in Social Work at Penn State." You want to convince the reader that you are interested in them by specifically outlining why you want to work for them and how you would contribute to the organization.

MIDDLE PARAGRAPH:

Describe your interest in the position, in the field of work, or in the organization. If you have a related class, volunteer, student activity, or work experience, be sure to mention pertinent data or accomplishments to show that you have specific qualifications or skills for this particular type of work. Refer to key aspects of the resume which relate to the job or employer, but don't restate complete sections of the resume.

CLOSING PARAGRAPH:

Mention your interest in discussing the job in person (i.e., ask for an interview). Express appreciation for being considered and include a statement about your desire to have an interview.

Sincerely,

(handwritten signature)

Your typed name

Sample Email Cover Letter With Resume Attached

Subject Line of Email Message: Communications Assistant Position

Dear Ms. Recruiter,

Your recent job posting for a communications assistant listed on FindAJob.net was not only exciting, but would be a great match with my skills. I would very much appreciate being considered for this position and believe my communications experience is very relevant to what you are seeking.

In my position as Communications Coordinator for XYZ student organization, I developed the text for the group's website, managed guest author submissions, and wrote and sent a weekly email newsletter to group members. In addition, during my internship with Representative John Doe, I responded to constituent correspondence, researched and prepared drafts for press releases, and was responsible for correspondence with office staff. I also have extensive experience writing articles and stories on a freelance basis, which, I believe, would be an ideal match for this position.

Articles are available for your review at:

URL
URL
URL

My resume is attached. If I can provide you with any additional writing samples or further information on my background and qualifications, please let me know. I hope that we can discuss in person my background and qualifications and how they will be of benefit to your firm and this position.

I look forward to speaking with you. Thank you for your consideration.

Anita Job
Address
Email
URL
Home Phone
Cell Phone

Note:

Attach your resume to your email message in the format requested by the employer. If a specific format isn't required, send as a PDF or RTF document.

Sample Cover Letter—Full-Time

10 Haller Hall
University Park, PA 16802

Date

James Donovan
HR Administrator
Xyntek, Inc.
301 Oxford Valley Rd.
Yardley, PA, 19067

Dear Mr. Donovan:

After reading your brochure and researching Xyntek, Inc., I became quite interested in possible employment in IT software and systems consulting. I am submitting this letter in application for this position.

I have a great deal of experience involving several programming languages, including SQL, ORACLE, JavaScript, JSP, HTML, and Visual Basic. In addition, I have worked with WordPerfect 5.0 - 7.0, dBASE, Rbase 2.0 - 5.5, FoxPro, Visual FoxPro, and Quattro Pro 4-6.

In my internship at XYZ Corporation I was part of a team responsible for the design, development and production of database candidate processing systems for their human resources department. My specific role involved testing and trouble-shooting databases as they were developed. This has proven very successful for XYZ and has increased efficiency of the recruiting process for the HR administrators. I have also been web page editing on contract. In a project for the State College Credit Union, I developed an internal search engine and an on-line loan application, and kept their web page up to date and added new features as needed.

I have lots of energy to exert in work and am an enthusiastic hard worker with the desire to learn many new concepts and skills. I would enjoy having Xyntek, Inc. utilize this energy. I look forward to hearing from you. Thank you for your time.

Cordially,

Mary E. Smith

Enclosure

Comments: Note that this candidate refers to the research she's done on the company and expresses a sincere interest. She also points out the amount and types of her relevant experiences in the field.

Sample Cover Letter—Internship

101 Nittany Lion Hall
University Park, PA 16802

Date

James Donovan
Research Director
Environmental Research Company
2358 Wilderness Street
Harrisburg, PA 17111

Dear Mr. Donovan,

As a third-year student in Environmental Resource Management with a minor in Biology, I am interested in expanding my skills in research through an internship. The scientific research summer internship position that was listed through Career Services is the type of position that not only can build my skills, but that would offer the opportunity for me to contribute to environmental research.

I have had a great deal of laboratory and field experience in chemistry, biology, and ecology. In the lab, I have performed tests on water samples, examined specimens for reactions to toxins, and entered findings into databases for analysis. In environmental field studies, I have conducted outdoor labs to assess water chemistry. Last summer, I worked as a conservation assistant at Clumber National Park.

I believe that I would be an asset to your program and hope that you agree that my qualifications seem to be a match for the position. If so, I would appreciate the opportunity for an interview. I look forward to speaking with you.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Signature

Michael E. Smith

Enclosure

Comments: This candidate has been able to learn about the position and is very effective at relating specific details about his accomplishments and skills to the particular employer's needs.

Other Sample Letters

Thank-You Letter

1234 E. College Ave.
State College, PA 16801
Date

William Johnson
LMO Pharmaceutical Company
9183 Short Hills Road
Pittsburgh, PA 15222

Dear Mr. Johnson:

Thank you for the opportunity to interview with you on Friday, October 23, 20XX here at Penn State. The Account Representative position we discussed is a wonderful opportunity for which I feel uniquely qualified. I appreciate the time and information you shared with me.

As we discussed, my background in both the sciences and business will enable me to interact effectively with physicians and pharmacists. Not only am I able to discuss the technical aspects of your products, I understand marketing techniques and the importance of the bottom line.

If you need any additional information from me, please do not hesitate to contact me by phone or e-mail. Again, thank you for meeting with me. I look forward to speaking with you again soon.

Sincerely,

Martin A. Student

Offer Acceptance

1000 S. Atherton St.
State College, PA 16801
Date

Harold Sherman
XYZ Corporation
678 5th Avenue
Albany, NY 12205

Dear Mr. Sherman:

Thank you for your recent offer of employment as a management trainee with XYZ Corporation. I am quite pleased to accept this offer. The position sounds quite challenging, particularly the 12 month rotation among your regional plants. I am looking forward to this challenge and believe I will be successful at meeting it.

I understand that your offer involves a starting date of June 6, 20xx. I also understand that the salary offered is \$4x,000, plus benefits discussed at my most recent interview. I will contact you within the next several weeks to discuss travel and moving details as you requested.

Once again, thank you for your offer. I am excited about becoming part of the XYZ Corporation team.

Sincerely,

Jane C. Doe