

LETTER WRITING

1. The Cover Letter

The most frequent correspondence in the job campaign is the cover letter, which accompanies the resume. Since this letter usually gives the employer a first impression of you, it should be professional model of good form and appearance. Never send a resume without a cover letter.

The letter is crucial since it must prompt the employer to become interested in you. Its ultimate purpose is to introduce your resume and to entice the employer to invite you for a personal interview. There are two types of cover letters: 1) letter of application; 2) letter of inquiry or prospecting letter.

IMPORTANT CHECKLIST:

DO

- Address your letter to a specific person by name, when possible (use full name in inside address; use Mr./Ms. with last name in salutation).
- Check the spelling of the name and the correct title of the person to whom you are writing.
- Prepare a separate, individually tailored letter for each potential employer.
- Attract the reader's interest during the first twenty words.
- Sell your skills and qualifications in terms of the contribution you can make to the employer.
- Demonstrate a match between the company's needs and your skills and career goals.
- Be positive and reflect your own personality.
- Refer to your enclosed resume.
- Request an interview.
- Take the initiative and mention that you will telephone to arrange an interview, whenever this technique is feasible. Always consider this method with your high priority companies.
- Use professional vocabulary and direct language.
- Use action verbs to highlight your qualifications and to make the letter more lively and interesting. (Refer to the handout "RESUME KEY WORDS" for a list of action verbs.)
- Highlight your resume, without repeating word for word (use examples).
- Keep it short -- no more than one page (3 to 4 paragraphs).
- Use quality 8 ½" x 11" paper, preferably the same as used for your resume.
- Conform to good business style.
- Proofread for spelling, typographical, and grammatical errors (and spell check!).
- Read aloud to review for clarity, conciseness, and style.
- Include a word-processed signature and SIGN YOUR NAME
- Address the envelope the same as the inside address.
- Include correct postage.
- Send e-mail cover letters in the message, not as an attachment.

DO NOT

- Be aggressive, overbearing, cute, or humorous.
- Include the name of anyone recommending you unless you have permission.
- Rely on others to mail your letter, transcripts, or application form.
- Include a picture, unless it is a definite requirement.
- Use your university or company stationary.
- Use novel approaches.
- Use bright colored paper or ribbons.
- Mention personal problems unless they impede working ability.
- Make any negative comments regarding previous employers.
- Staple your cover letter to the resume.
- Begin sentences frequently with "I"

2. Pre-Interview Letter

This letter enables you to introduce yourself before the actual interview. It should be written primarily for on-campus interviews, but is not seeking your major but for which you feel qualified, this letter can be utilized to obtain permission for an interview. This often-neglected form of correspondence is an invaluable aid and can help you get ahead in your job search. Include a resume to give the recruiter additional information.

3. Thank You Letter - First Screening Interview

It is important to send thank you letters after your initial interview, whether that interview is on campus, at the company, or by phone. Be sure to reaffirm your interest and, if possible, restate a point which the interviewer found particularly interesting. You can also take this opportunity to bring up an important fact which you may not have mentioned in the interview. A thank you is not lengthy, but should leave the interviewer with a positive impression regarding your qualifications, interest, and professionalism.

4. Accepting Invitation

Upon being invited to the company for a second interview, acknowledge the invitation with a written response. Confirm dates, times, and places with the employer. It is embarrassing for both parties if the itinerary is not correctly arranged. Provide any additional information the employer requests.

5. Declining Invitation

Once you decide that your interests are elsewhere, thank the employer for their consideration and state that other career plans have been made. NEVER IGNORE AN INVITATION LETTER. It's important to follow up; you may want to pursue employment opportunities with that employer in the future.

6. Thank You, Reaffirming Interest

After the visit to the employer's offices, send a brief note indicating continued interest. The expense statement is usually attached for reimbursement purposes, if previously discussed. Express thanks and appreciation and send it to the main individual with whom you made arrangements. Extend thanks to other individuals in this letter, asking the person to forward your gratitude. If you spent a significant amount of time with more than one person, you should send INDIVIDUALLY TAILORED thank you letters to each.

7. Thank You, Terminating Discussions

If the visit to the employer's offices determines that you no longer wish to be considered, the employer should be so advised. Do this quickly, as there may be another interested candidate the employer can call. Thank the employer for their time and consideration.

8. Offer Acknowledgment

After receiving an offer, written or verbal, an IMMEDIATE acknowledgment of the offer should be made. Thank the employer for the interest shown and repeat your understanding of the terms discussed (salary, job title, duties, etc.). The employer is aware that a candidate may have other offers. It is proper, therefore, to indicate the date you will make a decision. If you need more time, request an extension. It is better to ask for a delay than to accept a position about which you are unsure. Remember, however, that an employer has the right to withdraw the offer any time prior to your acceptance.

9. Acceptance of an Offer

This letter constitutes an ethical contract between candidate and the employer. An acceptance should again include the terms, as they have been agreed upon. ONLY ONE JOB OFFER CAN BE ACCEPTED! Your decision is a binding commitment.

10. Rejection of an Offer

As soon as a decision to accept a job is made, immediately notify all other employers of that fact. Simply advise them that this was a difficult decision, but that this employer's opportunities more closely fit your interests and aspirations. It is proper to indicate where employment was accepted, but it is not necessary. By courteously thanking them for their interest, you may keep the doors open to the future.

Many Career Library resources offer sample letters for you to review including the NACE Job Choices booklet (copies are available in the Career Center). Take advantage of this collection and of the opportunity to have your



letters critiqued by a Career Center staff member.

Your Street Address
City, State Zip **(Hit 2 returns)**

Today's Date **(Hit 2 returns)**

Mr. Biff Frizzle
Personnel Manager
Hair Care Manufacturing
101 Split End Drive
Toupee, CA 12290 **(Hit 2 returns)**

Dear Mr. Frizzle: **(Hit 2 returns)**

Opening paragraph should generate enough interest to encourage the reader to want to press forward. Identify the position for which you are applying or inquiring and explain how you learned about it. Give information to show your specific interest in the company and in this particular position. **(Hit 2 returns)**

Middle paragraph(s) should create desire. Briefly give details of your background, your education and experience that support your candidacy. Highlight your most attractive attributes; mention your specific challenges and aspirations. Do not make this a repeat of your resume, but emphasize or add pertinent background information. **(Hit 2 returns)**

Refer the reader to your enclosed resume. How will the company benefit from you being hired? In what way will you fit into the scheme of things? Why are you a good candidate for this position? Show a match between you and the company/position. **(Hit 2 returns)**

Closing paragraph should ask for action. State that you are available for an interview at their convenience and look forward to hearing from them. Since the purpose is to get an interview, make a request. A positive request is harder to avoid than a vague hope. If you will be in their area at a certain time, mention the dates. You may even indicate that you will follow up with them in two to three weeks. Be sure to thank them for their consideration. **(Hit 2 returns)**

Sincerely, **(Hit 4 returns)**

Tammy Tangle **(Hit 2 returns)**

Enc.