Cover Letters

How to write effective job application letters

Letters are important contacts with employers. Here’s how to make a good impression....

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<td>Think it out</td>
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<td>Get to the point</td>
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<td>Pay careful attention to detail</td>
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<td>Produce it on good quality paper</td>
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<td>Address it to a specific person with name, title, organization and address</td>
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Types of Cover Letters

Letter of Application

This letter is one of the most important components in your job search. It’s the initial liaison between you and the employer. Its purpose is to market you and your skills.

Basic Rules

- Send it in response to an advertised job
- Keep it to one page if possible
- Personalize it by marketing your experience, education, and goals toward the specific position for which you’re applying
- Stress your personal qualities
- Remember to include a sentence that references your resume, as the cover letter and the resume should work together to demonstrate your ability to meet the employer’s needs. For example: “As you can see from my resume…”
- Choose high quality paper

Cold Call Letter

Use this to inquire about current or potential job openings. You’re attempting to uncover vacancies and establish communication with organizations about future employment. Personalize each letter based on your research of the organization. This is a critical element of a proactive job search.
Basic Rules

- Use the full name and job title of the reader when possible
- Ask if a position exists or is expected to exist in the near future
- Point out your experience or academic accomplishments related to the position
- Be creative and grab the reader’s attention with your first sentence
- Enclose a resume and offer to provide additional information
- State your interest in the company and why you want to work there
- Ask for an appointment for an informational interview

Follow-up Letter

This is a thank you letter sent after the interview. This letter will set you apart from other qualified candidates.

Basic Rules

- Thank the interviewer for the interview
- Remind him/her of your interest in the position
- State at least two reasons why you’re uniquely qualified for the job
- If you overlooked anything during the interview or want to correct a statement you made, now is the time to do it
- Refer to any information you provided during the application process
- Offer to provide additional information
- State that you look forward to hearing from them soon

Acknowledgment of a Job Offer

Many employers understand you may need time to make a decision. Use this time productively to think about what you need, value and want out of this job.

Basic Rules

- Indicate receipt of the employer’s offer, when it was dated and what position you were offered within two days after receiving the offer
- State your interest in the job offer and working for the organization
- Indicate specifically when you’ll notify the employer of your decision if a date hasn’t been set
- Follow-up and notify the employer on the date you indicated

Accepting a Job Offer

Send this letter even if you’ve accepted by phone.

Basic Rules

- Indicate receipt of the offer, when it was dated and what position you’re accepting
- Convey a positive attitude about your future and opportunities with the company
- Express thanks to anyone in the organization who was especially helpful in the process
- Suggest a starting date if one hasn’t been agreed upon
- If your address or phone number will change before you begin employment, indicate where you may be reached
- If you’re relocating, indicate your travel plans and expected date of arrival
Turning Down an Offer

Basic Rules

- Notify the employer as soon as possible as your promptness will be appreciated
- Indicate your appreciation of the offer
- State why you’re turning down the job
- Don’t say anything negative about the company
- Do state something positive about the organization
- Thank anyone who was especially helpful in the process

Follow-up After a Rejection by the Employer

This is a hard letter to write, but it’s an important letter. You never know when your paths may cross again.

Basic Rules

- Thank the employer for considering you for the position
- Reiterate your interest in working for the organization
- Request your resume be kept on file
- Ask to be notified should future job openings occur
- Follow up in 3-6 months and inquire about job openings

Note: This is the perfect time to contact the organization to request feedback regarding the recruitment process and what you could have done to be more competitive. Indicate your intent to contact them in the follow-up letter and then follow through. If you are interested in working for the employer, this is another important element of a proactive job search.
What to Include in a Cover Letter:

Your Name
Your street address or PO Box (optional)
Your city, state and zip code
Your phone number and email address
Date you will mail the letter

Name of contact person
Their street address or PO Box
Their city, state and zip code

Dear Ms., Mr. or Dr. ________: (Never address "To Whom It May Concern," or "Dear Sir or Madam." If you absolutely cannot obtain a person's name, then use the salutation "Dear Personnel Director:" or similar.)

First Paragraph:
Purpose: To grab the reader's attention and establish interest in employment with that company!
- Provide an opening sentence that entices the reader to continue reading
- Name the job for which you are applying, also say how you learned of the position
- Mention the name of the person (if any) who referred you to the organization and position, preferably a colleague of the contact person
- Mention specific knowledge of the company to indicate your interest

Second Paragraph:
Purpose: Demonstrate your abilities relating to the position, and your potential value to the company, by highlighting your key strengths and experiences!
- Acknowledge the skills required for the position in which you're interested
- State the specific skills/strengths/experiences you are prepared to bring to the company. These skills should address qualities needed to succeed in the position for which you are applying
- Give examples of your skills and any related work experience (quantified results, accomplishments, and achievements). Explain how these skills will transfer to the position
- Don’t repeat the information from your resume, instead refer the reader to enclosed resume or application, elaborating on/providing more detail regarding how you meet the job qualifications

Final Paragraph:
Purpose: Ensure follow-up action and extend your appreciation for being considered!
- You may indicate that you will contact the employer. (i.e. I will be contacting you on Wed. afternoon to discuss scheduling an interview)
- Make it easy for the person to contact you. Even though it is on your resume, you should list phone number(s), and email where you can most easily be reached
- Thank them sincerely for their time and consideration of your application

Sincerely,
Sign your name in ink (if submitting a hard copy application)
Type your name
Enclosures: resume; application
Sample Cover Letters

Letter of Application

Tom Kingsley
City, State, Zip Code
Phone number, email address
Date

Mr. John Patterson
Director of Human Resources
Northwest Cable System
P.O. Box 375
Portland, Oregon 97211

Dear Mr. Patterson:

I recently attended a presentation on Northwest Cable Systems at The University of Montana. I was very impressed with the program and with Northwest Cable Systems as a whole. Particularly appealing is the range of industries and clients served, and your company's ability to forge lasting partnerships. I am writing to apply for the writer/editor position advertised this week through Griz eRecruiting at The University of Montana.

I am convinced my skills can make a difference to the Northwest Cable Systems team. As you can see from my resume, my qualifications include a B.A. in Liberal Studies and more than three years of writing and editing experience. In addition to writing for our campus newspaper, I have interned with a local cable company (TCI) and worked on their monthly cable guide. These experiences have allowed me to develop strong writing, editing, photography, and design skills. I am interested in public relations, branding and expanding my experience with social media marketing and confident I can make a contribution to Northwest Cable Systems.

Thank you for taking time to consider me for the writer/editor opportunity. I welcome the opportunity to visit you in Portland and discuss my ideas about how my creativity and enthusiasm can be an asset to Northwest Cable Systems. I will be contacting you next week to confirm that you received my application materials. I can be reached at 406-541-2286 or via email at: tom.kingsley@email.com. I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Sincerely,

Tom Kingsley
Enclosures: resume, references
Cold Call Letter

Your Name  
Current Address  
City, State, Zip Code  
Date  

Mr. David Bussison, Director of Big Sky Youth Homes  
900 Highway 93 South  
Missoula, MT  59803  

Dear Mr. Bussison:  

I recently had an opportunity to work with Joan Blastik, your assistant director, on a volunteer food drive, and was very impressed with what she had to say about your organization. Since then, I have engaged in researching Big Sky Youth Homes and am impressed by your commitment to providing counseling services to youth. I am writing to express my interest in working for your organization and inquire if you expect any staff openings for a youth counselor in the near future.  

As you can see from my resume, I will complete a Bachelor of Arts in Psychology, with a minor in Communication Studies, in May 2015. After graduation, my goal is to become established locally with an organization such as Big Sky Youth Homes and counsel at-risk youth. My experience working with teenagers at a youth camp in Seattle, Washington, along with my volunteer work at the Missoula YMCA, has allowed me to develop effective relationship-building skills and the ability to deal with difficult situations. My enclosed resume provides more detail regarding my experience and accomplishments. I can provide additional information about my background at your request.  

Thank you for taking time to review my qualifications. I will contact your office on Monday morning to confirm that you received my application documents. If you expect an opening, I would like the opportunity to meet with you and discuss your program and needs. If you do not anticipate a position opening in the near future, please keep my resume on file, and I will check back with you in the spring.  

Sincerely,  

Paul Millmore  
Enclosure: resume
Follow Up/Thank You Letter

Your Name  
Current Address  
City, State, Zip Code  
Date

Ms. Mary Brown, Director of College Recruiting  
Midwest Federal Credit Union  
1811 South 9th Street  
Minneapolis, MN  56001

Dear Ms. Brown:

Thank you for the opportunity to interview with you yesterday on campus for the Loan Officer position.

My interest in the position and in working for Midwest Federal Credit Union was enhanced by the detailed information you provided regarding the training program. My education and two years of experience in customer service will enable me to develop into a competent loan officer and make a valuable contribution to your office.

Please feel free to contact me at 406-555-2341 if you would like additional information. The best time to reach me is after 3:00 PM, or you can leave me a message and I will return your call as soon as possible.

Thank you again, for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Kay Peterson
Acknowledgment

Your Name
Current Address
City, State, Zip Code
Date

Ms. Mary Brown, Directory of College Recruiting
Midwest Federal Credit Union
1811 South 9th Street
Minneapolis, MN  56001

Dear Ms. Brown:

Thank you for your phone call and letter dated April 17, 2014 offering me the Loan Officer position at an annual salary of $33,500.00. I am very excited about the opportunity to become a member of your staff.

I appreciate your willingness to allow me time to complete my final exams and finalize my decision. As agreed, I will contact you by April 30th.

Once again thank you for your interest in me and an opportunity to become part of your organization.

Sincerely,

Kay Peterson
Acceptance Letter

Your Name
Current Address
City, State, Zip Code
Date

Ms. Mary Brown, Director of College Recruiting
Midwest Federal Credit Union
1811 South 9th Street
Minneapolis, MN  56001

Dear Ms. Brown:

I am pleased to accept your offer to become a Loan Officer for Midwest Federal Credit Union.

The starting date of June 1st will allow me adequate time to attend graduation and relocate to Minneapolis. If you need to contact me after May 15th, I’ll be in Billings, Montana and can be reached at 406-555-2341.

I am very enthusiastic about the opportunity to start my financial career with Midwest Federal Credit Union and want to thank you for making it all possible.

Sincerely,

Kay Peterson
Declining an Offer

Your Name
Current Address
City, State, Zip Code
Date

Ms. Mary Brown, Director of College Recruiting
Midwest Federal Credit Union
1811 South 9th Street
Minneapolis, MN 56001

Dear Ms. Brown:

I want to thank you for offering me the Loan Officer position with Midwest Federal Credit Union. As I mentioned in the interview, one of my goals is to obtain an MBA. I recently been accepted to the MBA program at Pennsylvania State University and after thoroughly weighing my options, have decided to pursue my education at this time.

I would like to contact you in a year after the completion of my MBA and discuss what opportunities may exist with Midwest Federal Credit Union at that time. Again, thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Kay Peterson
Follow Up After Rejection by Employer

Your Name  
Current Address  
City, State, Zip Code  
Date  

Ms. Mary Brown, Director of College Recruiting  
Midwest Federal Credit Union  
1811 South 9th Street  
Minneapolis, MN  56001  

Dear Ms. Brown:  

I was disappointed to hear that I was not selected for the Bank Loan Officer position with Midwest Federal Credit Union. I appreciated you returning my call and the positive feedback you gave me regarding my interview.  

I remain interested in future opportunities with Midwest Federal Credit Union and will contact you, as you suggested, in six months.  

Once again, thank you for your consideration.  

Sincerely,  

Kay Peterson