

Cover Letter Guide

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COVER LETTER WRITING GUIDELINES

Written correspondence can be one of the biggest challenges in your job search and can have a great impact on the outcome of your application or inquiry. A cover letter introduces you to an employer and works to supplement and clarify your resume. You can tailor your cover letter to each employer by focusing on your interest in that particular firm and why your specific set of skills and background will benefit it.

Cover letters should be clear and concise

There are hundreds of letter samples available and it can be helpful to refer to them for ideas. However, keep in mind that your letter should be as individual as you are, not copied from a book. Remember to keep your letter conversational in tone.

A cover letter should always accompany your resume unless the employer specifically states that it should be omitted.

The following is a list of helpful hints for constructing good letters:

- ❑ Answer an advertisement for an open position as soon as possible. Thoroughly read and re-read the job description to help you determine what the employer is seeking in applicants, so you can “speak to the needs of the organization.” Tailor your cover letter to the specific job.
- ❑ Research, research, research – the company, the industry, and the position so you can incorporate your knowledge into your letter.
- ❑ Follow business letter format (see examples).
- ❑ Whenever possible, address the letter to a specific, identified person in the organization, preferably the hiring manager in the department where you wish to work (not the human resources department). If you cannot find the name of a specific person, write “Dear Hiring Manager,” NOT “To whom it may concern.”
- ❑ State in the first sentence why you are writing.
- ❑ Answer all questions with the exception of requests for salary requirements.
- ❑ Be honest. Always be able to back up your claims, with evidence and specific examples from your experience.
- ❑ Demonstrate originality and enthusiasm.
- ❑ Make sure your letter is clear and precise. Check and re-check for typographical errors and accuracy of telephone numbers.

Don't...

- ❑ Make the letter more than one page.
- ❑ Use generic, all-purpose cover letters – never copy cover letters.
- ❑ Be long-winded. Make your points succinctly. Remember, “Less said is often stronger than too much explanation.”
- ❑ Send personal photos, videos or use gimmicky stationery.
- ❑ Exaggerate your skills or experience.

Electronic Cover Letters and Resumes

- ❑ Generally, send a cover letter and resume in the body of the e-mail unless the employer instructs otherwise. Additionally, a cover letter and resume can also be sent as attachments for employers who may be willing to accept them (some employers do not open attachments due to concerns about viruses).
- ❑ Omit the heading information on the cover letter when copying it into an e-mail. The cover letter should be followed directly by the resume in the same e-mail, so the heading information on the resume will suffice. Eliminate unnecessary blank lines so the employer will not need to scroll down the e-mail to view the information.

COVER LETTER PARAGRAPH STARTERS/CLOSERS

Looking for new opening sentences for your cover letter? Check out these options--remember to adapt them to make your cover letter individual and unique!

Opening Paragraph Starters

I was very pleased to learn about your opening for a _____ position.

Please accept this letter and resume as an application for the position of _____
_____ advertised in _____.

I would like the opportunity to put my education and experience to work for your company. Please accept the enclosed resume as an application for this exciting position.

(Prospecting letter) Does your company anticipate the need for an _____? As a recent graduate of Golden Gate University with a _____ Degree in, I am eager to apply my skills and experience in the field of _____.

I am currently attending Golden Gate University and plan to complete my _____
_____ Degree in May 2002.

Closing Paragraph Starters

I am eager to learn more about the position and describe my qualifications to you.

I would be delighted to speak with you in person about this position.

I would be very pleased to discuss the position and my qualifications further with you.

I look forward to having the opportunity to meet with you to discuss the position and my qualifications.

I would appreciate the opportunity to meet with you personally to discuss your needs and how I could contribute to your company's success.

Thank you for taking the time to review my resume.

I'll call you next week to see about the possibility of arranging an interview (meeting).

I will call you next week to see when your schedule might permit a meeting (interview).

I look forward to your reply.

I look forward to hearing from you so that we can arrange a meeting.

BASIC COVER LETTER FORMAT #1

First Paragraph: Introduce Yourself

- State the reason for the letter.
- Name the specific position or type of work in which you are interested.
- Indicate how you heard about the opening.
 - Examples
 - I am writing

Second Paragraph: Link Yourself with the Employer/Position

- Why are you interested in this employer? This position? This industry?
- Research, Research, Research – the company, the industry and whatever you can uncover about the position. State why the position, the company, or the industry (or all three) is a good fit for you.

Third Paragraph: Sell Yourself

- Why should the employer hire you? What can you do for the employer?
- Explain how your academic background, work history, and other skills and abilities qualify you for the job.
- Point out specific achievements or unique qualifications. Pull job requirements directly from the job postings, and specify how you have demonstrated these qualities.
- Sell yourself; convey enthusiasm.

Closing Paragraph: Next Steps You Will Take

- Thank employer for consideration and repeat your interest in the position/company.
- Indicate your desire for a personal interview.
- Be pro-active whenever possible; specify how you will follow-up with the employer. If you state you will follow up with the employer, make sure to do so!

BASIC COVER LETTER FORMAT #2

Date

Your Street Address
Your City, State, Zip
Phone Number

Employer's Name
Title
Company Name
Street Address
City, State, Zip

Dear Mr./Ms. _____ (or use title, such as, Dear Hiring Manager, if name is not known),

INITIAL PARAGRAPH: Briefly state the reason for the letter, the specific position or type of work for which you are applying. Indicate where you learned of the opening. Some examples include:

I am writing to express my interest in the position of _____.
Your advertisement in the _____ for a _____ seems to perfectly match my background and experience.
I am writing to you at the recommendation of _____.
In response to your posting for a _____ on your company's website, I have attached my resume for your consideration.

SECOND PARAGRAPH: Indicate why you are interested in the position, the company, its products or services. State clearly what you can do for the employer. If you are a recent graduate or still in school, explain how your academic experience makes you a well-qualified candidate. Try not to repeat the same information the reader will find in your resume. Sell yourself! Convey enthusiasm! Examples:

My qualifications for the position include...
I believe my background in...
I have experience/education in the field of...

THIRD PARAGRAPH: Your closing paragraph should indicate your desire for a personal interview. Close your letter with a statement or question which will encourage a response. Don't forget to thank the addressees for their time and interest. Examples:

I would like to speak to you in person....
Should you be interested in my qualifications...
For an interview, I can be reached at...

Sincerely,

Your signature

Your name

Enclosure

TWO SAMPLE LETTERS IN RESPONSE TO POSTED POSITION - #1

Margery Manning
1400 Ripley Drive
San Francisco, CA 94222
415-222-3333 (Home) 415-570-4444 (Cell)
mmanning@outpost.net

May 11, 2008

Ms. Patricia Roundhall
Manager, Regional Operations
Maxwell House Network Systems
24 Evergreen Drive
South San Francisco, CA 92242

RE: Operations Analyst (Ref. No. 224567)

Dear Ms. Roundhall,

In May 2008, I will be graduating from Golden Gate University with an MBA, concentration in Operations Management. I was very excited to learn of your opening for an Operations Analyst through Craigslist and am enclosing my resume in application for the position.

The September 30, 2005 issue of Business Week mentioned that Maxwell House Network Systems is the "company to watch" in the field of computer networking, citing its record of success and future plans for innovative projects. I would welcome the opportunity to contribute my own energy and expertise, as an Operations Analyst, to ensure its sustained and continued success.

Your description of the Operations Analyst position looks like an excellent match for my qualifications. I have strong organizational skills that were increasingly developed while I simultaneously held a part-time job and completed an intensive MBA program. I received positive feedback regarding both my written and verbal communication skills from both professors and internship supervisors, and have been know as a leader in teams among my peers. My experience in academics and on the job has given me a strong knowledge base to succeed in your organization.

I will call you next week to see about arranging a personal meeting to discuss the position and my qualifications. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely Yours,

Margery Manning

Margery Manning

Enclosure: Resume

TWO SAMPLE LETTERS IN RESPONSE TO POSTED POSITION - #2

Margery Manning
1400 Ripley Drive
San Francisco, CA 94222
415-222-3333 (Home) 415-570-4444 (Cell)
mmanning@outpost.net

May 11, 2008

Ms. Patricia Roundhall
Manager, Regional Operations
Maxwell House Network Systems
24 Evergreen Drive
South San Francisco, CA 92242

RE: Operations Analyst (Ref. No. 224567)

Dear Ms. Roundhall,

In May 2008, I will be graduating from Golden Gate University with an MBA, concentration in Operations Management. I was very excited to learn of your opening for an Operations Analyst through Craigslist and am enclosing my resume in application for the position.

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Your description of the Operations Analyst position looks like an excellent match for my qualifications. I offer:

- **Strong Organization Skills** - Attending school full-time while maintaining a part-time job has helped me become an expert in scheduling, time management, prioritization and efficiency.
- **Excellent Written and Oral Communication Skills** - I have received praise from my professors and internship supervisor for the excellence of my research and project reports. I have honed my oral communication skills by making numerous class presentations. In addition, my job as Student Assistant in the Office of Student Affairs has been invaluable in helping me to refine my communication skills, since it requires that I communicate daily with students and staff to clarify requests, provide information, and resolve problems in a professional manner.
- **Teamwork Experience** - Golden Gate's emphasis on team projects has also given me many opportunities to develop teamwork skills.
- **Knowledge of Operations and Logistics** - Excellent coursework at Golden Gate and my prior internship have given me a strong knowledge base.

I will call you next week to see about arranging a personal meeting to discuss the position and my qualifications. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely Yours,
Margery Manning
Margery Manning

Enclosure: Resume

APPLICATION LETTER – RESPONSE TO AN ONLINE POSITION

Many employer web sites will provide you with the room to submit both a cover letter and your resume. When applying online, make sure to read the job description and requirements very carefully. The job description itself will supply you with many of the key words you will want to have in both your resume and cover letter. The description will also help you to prioritize your relevant accomplishments *in order of importance to the employer*. These extra efforts may make the difference of your resume being screened beyond the database that is scanning for keywords to actually having your resume fall into the hands of the hiring manager!

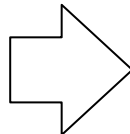
Sample Job Posting:

Company:	ABC Wireless	Posting Until:	Until Filled
Position:	Financial Analyst	Hours Per Week:	40+
Location:	San Francisco, CA	Contact:	Not Available
Base Pay:	N/A	Email:	Not Available
Industry:	Wireless	Phone:	Not Available
Required Education:	4 Year Degree	Fax:	Not Available
Required Experience:	At Least 3 Years	Ref ID:	26107-ZCB
Business Unit /	Finance / Finance	Relocation	No
Department:		Covered:	

Description: Provide financial planning, forecasting and analysis support. Act as communicator of assessment of progress against strategic and tactical plans. Ability to obtain, manipulate and analyze data. Understand key drivers of the business and provide management with accurate, timely and relevant information for decision making. Evaluate and advise on district's financial performance. Anticipate changes in the business and provide management with short and long-range forecasts of business performance based on key drivers. Identify opportunities for process improvement in the district to improve quality and reduce cost of service. Assist in monthly financial close as necessary and interpret financial data.

Education: Bachelor's degree in related discipline or equivalent experience required. MBA or MS in Finance desired. Experience in financial analysis, forecasting, planning and evaluating financial performance. Proficiency with personal computers and use of databases, financial, spreadsheet and presentation applications and modeling techniques. Prior knowledge of Oracle general ledger database tools a plus. Strong communication skills required. Experience in the cellular industry strongly preferred.

See sample cover letter on the next page.



SAMPLE APPLICATION LETTER – RESPONSE TO AN ONLINE POSITION

Know your audience. Before you write the letter, review the position description, the organization and how your experience and interests match the needs of the employer.

Try to find the name of the recruiter or Hiring Manager – if the job description doesn't provide a name, address your letter to the hiring manager.

Dear Hiring Manager,

State the purpose of your letter: why are you applying / to which position?
How did you learn about the position?

I am interested in the Financial Analyst position on the *CareerBuilder.com* website on January 23, 2003, the reference identification number for this position is 26107-ZCB.

Make sure to identify the job reference number!

The enclosed resume describes my education and experience. As a large employer in the Bay Area, I have followed your company and its record growth over the past few years. The San Francisco Business Times January 20, 2003 edition announced that you will be launching the wideband code division multiple band access technology. ABC's technical innovations are one of the principal reasons why I am targeting your company – I understand how these innovations can positively influence revenues. As a finance professional with relevant experience, I am interested in evaluating the financial performance of the organization and to identifying opportunities to improve quality and to reduce the cost of service.

Explain why you are interested in this employer. Show your knowledge of the company.

The following are examples of qualifications that pertain to your requirements:

- Analyzed Rivendell Rivets financial information, detailing assets, liabilities and capital. Summarized and interpreted current and projected company financial position for department managers.
- As a part of my MS in Finance, in a class project, analyzed Romanoff Company investment plan using spreadsheet applications. Automated spreadsheet to calculate IRR, NPV, MIRR and payback period with different depreciation methods.

Emphasize your qualifications for the position. Compare your experiences to the requirements of the job. Think of what you can do for the employer.

Thank you for your consideration. I will follow up with you next week; I hope to be able to discuss my background and the position in further detail. I can be reached directly at 415-555-5555.

Suggest next steps. If you indicate you will follow up, make sure that you do!
Show appreciation.

Sincerely yours,

Howard Chau

Howard Chau

PROSPECTING LETTER

A Prospecting Letter can be used to seek information on possible job openings and request informational interviews. An effective letter will catch the reader's attention by concisely demonstrating your knowledge of the company and why you have chosen to contact the reader.

Sample Prospecting Letter - Possible Job Opening

Sharon G. Oliver
6767 Barnard Avenue
San Francisco, CA 94001
sharoliver@hotmail.com
(656) 223-7777

May 1, 2008

Jay Collins
Manager, Information Technology Services
Simple Solutions Corporation
111 Post Street, Suite 500
San Francisco, CA 94105

Dear Jay:

I have been working in the high technology industry for the past five years and I have followed your company with interest since its inception in July of 2002. Recently, I read that you received Series B financing which shows the investors' confidence in your products and business model, especially during these difficult economic conditions. As a start-up company, I understand how limited your resources must be even with the investment of new capital; that is why it is critical for you to hire the most effective and appropriate person for each position and that is the reason why I am contacting you.

I will graduate from the Golden Gate University in May 2003 with a B.S in Computer Information Systems. My experience includes a strong computer systems background with configuration, troubleshooting and support of Intel Pentium and Pentium Pro-based PCs and servers running Microsoft Windows 98 and NT 4.0. As an Information Systems professional with your organization, I would bring knowledge of Intel-based computer programs as well as other technical skills such as video, communications and networking.

I did not see any open positions posted in the Information Systems department but I did want to contact you and express my sincere interest in your company. I would welcome the opportunity to meet with you to discuss current or future opportunities with your company. I will telephone your office to arrange an appointment at your convenience.

Best regards,

Sharon Oliver

Sharon Oliver

Enclosure: Resume

Sample Prospecting Letter – Informational Interview Request

John H. Sorris
4987 S. Lima Street
San Francisco, CA 90087
(303) 775-8976
jhsorris@haven.com

November 12, 2006

Mr. Gregory Allen
Vice President Marketing
EVERGREEN PRODUCTS INC
1776 Roamer Street
San Jose, CA 40908

Dear Mr. Allen:

I am currently a student in the MS Marketing Program at Golden Gate University. My studies have exposed me to the multitude of career paths that can be traveled in the field of marketing. In the course of my exploration, I have become very interested in the area of consumer product marketing as a possible fit for my talents. My instructor, Mr. David Henson, suggested that I contact you to inquire about the possibility of arranging an informational interview to learn more about this exciting field from the point of view of an experienced and successful professional.

Evergreen Products is a respected leader in the consumer cosmetics industry, with a diverse clientèle and a record of innovation in its product offerings and its approach to delivery of service. I would very much appreciate the opportunity to hear your thoughts about your own career, Evergreen Products, and the challenges and future opportunities that lie ahead in the area of consumer product marketing.

I would be very pleased to meet with you, at your convenience, for 20 minutes or whatever time you have available in your busy schedule. I will contact you in the next few days to see about arranging a meeting. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely Yours,

Gregory Allen

Gregory Allen

INTERVIEW THANK YOU LETTER

- Express appreciation for the interviewer's consideration and arrangement of meeting
- State the date of the interview and the name of the interviewer
- Reiterate your interest in the employer and the position. Mention new points or assets you may have forgotten to address in the original interview or become aware of afterwards.
- Ask any questions you may have that were not answered in the original interview.
- Type your Thank You letter (as opposed to hand writing) and use the same letterhead format that you used on your resume. This is another opportunity for you to demonstrate your professionalism and your written communication skills. A simple, well-written Thank You letter can make a significant impact on your prospective employer.

Delivery of Thank You Letters

You can either send your thank you letter by regular mail or by e-mail. Make the decision based on what is appropriate given the employer's industry, environment and work style. E-mail tends to be a more casual form of communication. Think of how many email messages you may receive on any given day. The advantage of emailing your Thank You letter is that it will be instantly delivered (and hopefully instantly read). If you are going to email your Thank You letter, to distinguish yourself, send the email as soon as possible after your interview.

Sample - Interview Thank You Letter

Richard Whitney
2556 Jacover Street
Palo Alto, CA 94654
(455) 678-9023
rwhitney@evergreen.com

January 23, 2007

Ms. Barbara D. Fasio, Manager
CREDIT TECHNOLOGY INC
3344 Bala Street
Pittsburg, PA 19007

Dear Ms. Fasio,

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to interview with you today for the position of Account Services Associate at Credit Technology Inc. I am impressed with the company and its unique manner of blending advanced technology and ongoing employee training to attain the superior level of customer service for which the company is known.

I believe my own background in customer service and recent coursework in the areas of technology and E-business would allow me to be a strong contributor to Credit Technology. I also want to mention that I recently completed a course in Advanced MS Access which significantly strengthened my skills in the area of data base management.

I would welcome the opportunity, as a member of the Credit Technology team, to provide services that meet the highest standards and support its continued growth in the credit industry.

I look forward to talking with you again soon.

With warm regards,

Richard Whitney

Richard Whitney

ACCEPTING AN OFFER

- ❑ Acknowledge the letter, verbal offer or telephone call by date.
- ❑ Be as specific as possible, mentioning starting salary and supervisor's name.
- ❑ Be sure to list and detail all items—benefits, reviews, etc. agreed to in the offer.
- ❑ State when you will be able to report to work.
- ❑ Acknowledge if the offer is contingent on any events, such as, receipt of transcript, passing of physical examination, certification etc.
- ❑ Express appreciation to the contact person and anyone else who has been particularly helpful in the recruiting process.
- ❑ Ask if any other information is required prior to reporting for work.

Sample - Accepting an Offer

Andi Anderly
1507 Lake Shore Drive
Boise, Idaho 50606
415-222-3333
andand@moremore.com

May 6, 2007

Mr. David Hightower, Division Manager
Applied Data International
1234 Company Lane
Cupertino, CA 56789

Dear Mr. Hightower:

I am writing to confirm my acceptance of your employment offer of May 3 and to tell you how delighted I am to be joining Applied Data. The work is exactly what I have prepared to do. I feel confident that I can make a significant contribution to the corporation, and I am grateful for the opportunity you have given me.

I will report to work at 8:00 a.m. on June 30. As we discussed, I will have completed the medical examination and all other compliance forms by that date. I will look forward to the new employee orientation. This will also confirm my acceptance of the compensation and benefits package as described in your May 3rd letter.

I am excited to have the opportunity to work with you and your fine team. I appreciate your confidence in me and am pleased to be joining your staff.

Regards,

Andi Anderly

Andi Anderly

DECLINING AN OFFER

- ❑ Always send a letter declining a job offer as soon as you have made the decision not to accept the offer.
- ❑ Express appreciation for the offer
- ❑ State the exact position for which you were being considered.
- ❑ Decline graciously.
- ❑ Briefly explain reason for choice, sticking to the facts. No profuse apology is necessary.

Sample - Declining an Offer

Marty Nelson
4567 Harvard Road
Sausalito, CA 98901
(345) 678-9090
mnelson@outhink.com

Mr. Richard Hegarty, Manager
DIGITAL ENTERPRISES
4567 Harbor Drive, Suite 10
Sausalito, CA 98701

Dear Richard,

Thank you very much for offering me the position of systems analyst with Digital Enterprises. I appreciate your discussing the details of the position with me and giving me time to consider your offer.

Digital Enterprises is a fine organization and there are many aspects of the position that are appealing. However, I believe it is in our best interests that I decline your kind offer. This has been a difficult decision but I believe it is an appropriate one for my career at this time.

I want to thank you for your time and consideration. It was a pleasure to meet with you and your fine staff.

Sincerely,

Marty Nelson

Marty Nelson

REFERENCES

- Do not send unsolicited references with application letters and resumes. In most cases references should not be submitted to the employer until after an interview or when there is a job offer. Sometimes applications to educational institutions or governmental agencies will require references as part of the application package.
- Prepare a list of a minimum of three professional/personal references.
- Include home phone numbers *only* if given permission by your reference.
- Use the same heading as your resume and set list at left margin.
- Be sure to obtain the consent of each of your references to the use of their name and contact information; let them know when you submit their contact information to an employer so they will be prepared to respond.

Sample - References

LAURA MOTT
800 Main Street
San Francisco, CA 94000
415-444-4444
lmott@whoknows.com

REFERENCES

John Jones

President, CIE Accounting
ABC Corporation
210 Montgomery Street, Suite 500
San Francisco, CA 94111
W: (415) 555-6666
Email: jj@hotmail.com
Relationship: Supervisor at ABC Corporation

Mary Silver, PhD

Adjunct Professor
Golden Gate University
536 Mission Street
San Francisco, CA 94105
W: (415) 442-4444
Email: msilver@ggu.edu
Relationship: Instructor in Federal Income Tax Course

Jerry Runwell

22 Hitchcock Drive
Novato, CA 99945
H: (415) 222-6666
Email: jrunwell@jupiter.com
Relationship: Served with me as Co-Chair of Accounting Club, 2002-03