

Writing a Cover Letter

Cover Letter Content

Your cover letter should be one page, three to four paragraphs long, and single spaced. Begin with your address, the potential employer's name and title, the company name and address, the salutation, and end with your closing and signature.

Paragraph 1

Employers receive hundred of letters, so open your letter with a strong statement. Explain why you are writing, where you found the job posting or who referred you to the job.

Paragraph 2-3

The middle paragraph is key since it can help you stand out from other candidates. Use the center of your letter to arouse the employer's curiosity. Highlight special accomplishments and show your enthusiasm, but do not merely repeat your resume. Explain how your qualifications and the company's needs are a good match.

Paragraph 4

In the final paragraph, you should give closure and make a specific request (usually for an interview). State when you will be available and how you can be reached. Indicate if you will follow up with a phone call to arrange a mutually convenient time to meet or talk on the phone. Also point out that additional information concerning your background and interests will gladly be furnished upon request. And of course, thank the employer for his/her time and consideration.

10 Cover Letter Tips

1. Use quality, professional, conservative paper, that matches your envelopes and resume.
2. Address your letter to an individual (with his/her title) rather than "To Whom It May Concern" or "Dear Sir/Madam."
3. Tailor the content to the position for which you are applying. Avoid using a form letter. If you do feel compelled to use an adaptable form letter, make sure it is not obvious.
4. Do not just repeat information from your resume. Highlight your relevant experiences, show your enthusiasm and confidence, and be positive.
5. Focus on the self-interest of the employer by including clues that hiring you will lead to higher production and greater efficiency.
6. If you decide to be whimsical, you gamble as to whether an employer will appreciate it. So unless the position calls for special creativity, it may not be worth the risk to submit an inventive representation of your work experience.
7. Try not to reach 'resume speak overkill,' or power words and phrases everyone uses.
Do not use slang and use active words.
8. Always check your letter for spelling (of the employer's name, too) and grammar errors. You may be screened out if there are careless mistakes on your resume.
9. Keep copies of each of the cover letters you send out, so when prospective employers contact you, you will not sound confused.
10. Consider mailing a group of letters at the same time, so you can easily follow up and compare offers.

Sample Cover Letter

August 25, 2007

Mr. Joe Employer
Human Resources
XYZ Company
PO Box 10000
Beaumont, TX 77720

Dear Mr. Employer:

I am interested in applying for the Computer Technician position at XYZ Company. I learned of this position through the Lamar University Career and Testing Center.

I will receive my bachelor's degree in Business Administration majoring in Management Information Systems from Lamar University in December 2007. My experience in maintaining computer hardware and network administration includes by internship at ABC Computers. Through this internship, I have learned to apply skills acquired in my IS Analysis and Design and Network/Telecomm classes to business applications. I also volunteered at the university's College of Business as a tutor in the computer lab. These experiences have helped me gain knowledge and improve my interpersonal communication skills.

I am confident that the qualifications above and those included on my resume make me a qualified candidate for this position. I am very interested in speaking with you further about this opportunity. I may be reached at (409) 123-4567. I look forward to hearing from you. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Lamar U. Cardinal

Sample Thank You Letter

211 Red Bird Lane
Beaumont, TX 77710
(409) 123-4567

September 5, 2007

Ms. Janice Wagner, Employment Representative
Employee Relations and Recruitment
Green House Industry
5446 West Temple Avenue, Suite 420
Houston, TX 77001

Dear Ms. Wagner:

Thank you for making my interview experience yesterday, for the position of Management Trainee at Green House Industry, such a positive one. I was very impressed with your professional, yet personal interview style and with the career opportunities you described.

In particular, I feel that your brokering program, with its emphasis on an ethical approach to sales, is just the kind of opportunity I have been looking for. As we discussed, my involvements as President and Ethics Chair of the Lamar University Finance Association and as a broker's assistant at Merrill Lynch have exposed me to virtually every aspect of the business, thus providing me with a 'head start' over many other students.

One other advantage I have gained, which we did not have the opportunity to discuss during the interview is an ability to 'draw out' potential clients in an effort to close a sale in an atmosphere of respect for their real needs. I would be happy to expand on this advantage in a second interview.

I look forward to hearing from you and understanding that you are very busy this time of year, I will wait until the week of September 24 to follow up with you.

Sincerely,

Lamar U. Cardinal

Sample Acceptance Letter

211 Redbird Lane
Beaumont, TX 77710

September 24, 2007

Joan Hayes, Director of Marketing
Associated Stores
425 East Street
Beaumont, TX 77706

Dear Ms. Hayes:

I am pleased to confirm my acceptance of your offer to join Associated Stores as Assistant Product Manager. As we discussed in our telephone conversation yesterday, I will begin work on October 8 at an annual salary of \$45,200. I will complete my pre-hire paper work, physical examination and drug test before the start date.

Thank you again for your consideration and help during the interview process. Your informative and personal approach was greatly appreciated.

Sincerely yours,

Lamar U. Cardinal

Sample Rejection Letter

211 Redbird Lane
Beaumont, TX 77710

September 25, 2007

George Riley, Regional Sales Manager
Green House Industry
5446 West Temple Avenue, Suite 420
Houston, TX 77001

Dear Mr. Riley:

Thank you very much for offering me the position of Management Trainee at Green House Industry. After carefully considering your offer, I have made a difficult decision not to accept it. I believe that at this point in my career, another position I have been offered fits better with my career interests and goals. It was a pleasure meeting with you and the members of your staff. I greatly appreciate your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Lamar U. Cardinal