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Guide to the Cover Letter & Thank You

Note: Request an electronic copy by emailing psyadv@iupui.edu. It will make following the numerous links in this document much easier.

Creating a cover letter is best done when you have a job ad in front of you to focus your writing. Keep in mind that the example that we provide below is not the ONLY way to write the letter. We have taken on different career areas below in our sample writing so you can read different approaches to writing. Review these samples online to get more ideas on how to approach your letter. http://www.quintcareers.com/cover_letter_samples.html

Before you begin your letter consider proper formatting. Start with your letterhead and then review this web resource to learn how to deal with return address, dates, salutations and the like.

<http://sbinformation.about.com/od/bizlettersamples/a/letter-format.htm>

Components of this sample letter below came from <http://www.butler.edu/career/resumes-letters/cover-letters>.

Sample first paragraph: In your initial paragraph, come to the point of your letter. Reveal your purpose and interest. Identify the position and your source of information. This paragraph is pretty cut and dry.

EXAMPLE: I would like to submit my application for XYZ position at ABC Company that I found on the IUPUI Science Careers website. I am a Psychology major with a concentration in Industrial Organization Psychology and my experience as an HR intern this past year at LMNOP prepared me well for this entry level position.

Take some time to draft your first paragraph...

Sample second paragraph: Indicate why you are interested in the position, the company, its products or services. Outline your strongest qualifications (education, strengths, accomplishments etc.) that match the position requirements or the work environment. As much as possible, provide evidence of your related experiences and accomplishments. Read the job description again – What are they looking for in a candidate? What transferable skills do you have to highlight? **Use the job ad to identify knowledge, skills, and characteristics they are looking for. Be sure to focus on how you can “solve their problem” by identifying what you bring to the table.**

EXAMPLE: As a major in psychology, I have taken great interest in working with troubled youth. My internship last semester at LMNOP allowed me the opportunity to educate and support a group of 12 inner city youth in a drug rehabilitation program. In my internship I improved my communication skills through presentations and leading groups. I was also fortunate to be able to get involved in weekly staff planning meetings and shared my observations and suggestions for care. Working in a human service setting like this has taught me the importance of developing trust and empathy and maintaining strict confidentiality. This opportunity confirmed my commitment to following this career path and I think XYZ position would be a great fit for me.

CAUTION: Do NOT try to use fancy language to “spice” up your cover letter. Keep it simple, clear and concise and look for ways to use examples from your work and academic life whenever you can to back up your assertion about yourself. Be sure that if you use a word that you don’t normally use, that you use it correctly. If you read your letter out loud, does it sound like you? If not, you are probably trying too hard. Let your language be professional without being too

over the top. I have read so many cover letters where students have tried to use fancy or presumably more sophisticated words only to misuse them and end up looking rather silly.

Take some time to draft your second paragraph...

Sample third paragraph: Convince the employer that you have the personal qualities and motivation to perform well in the position and contribute to the organization. Sell yourself. Make reference to your enclosed resume, but try not to repeat the same information the reader will find in the resume. Address some of the **transferable skills** you have that are relevant to the job.

As you will see on my resume, I have several years of experience in food service from fast food to higher end dining establishments. This work not only allowed me to finance 90% of my education, but it also developed in me a number of skills that I can use as an XYZ. For example, in serving customers and working with staff I learned to be a clearer communicator and developed strategies for effectively handling conflict. In my last position, I was given the added responsibility by my supervisor to train new employees which helped me develop my teaching and coaching skills. Training another employee and trying to meet the demands of the job also taught me a lot about managing my time and multitasking.

Take some time to draft your third paragraph...

Sample final paragraph: In the closing paragraph, suggest an action plan. Express appreciation to the reader for his or her time and consideration. Let the employer know how to obtain any additional information he or she may need prior to that time.

Thank you for taking time to review my application. I am very excited about this opportunity to work for ABC and I am interested in talking with you further about my interests and qualifications. I can be reached anytime at the number listed at the top of this letter if you have any further questions or would like to arrange an interview.

Sincerely,

Jana Smith

Take some time to draft your final paragraph...

Writing a Professional Thank You Note

Always follow up with a thank you note after an interview, informational interview, or any circumstances where a professional or potential employer took time out for you. Be sincere and know that a handwritten note is a very powerful connector. Here are some useful tips on constructing a professional thank you note:

<http://jobsearch.about.com/od/thankyouletters/a/thankinfo.htm>

