

Cover Letter Guidelines

Always send a cover letter along with an application or resume to an employer. Its purpose is to introduce you and show the prospective employer how your background fits their particular job. Use the cover letter to expand on points from your resume that you feel are especially noteworthy or relevant. You can also let the employer know that you are willing to relocate or that you have a mutual acquaintance. You should demonstrate that you have done your homework on the organization and know how you can be an asset to the employer. Prepare an original cover letter for each job – NOT a form letter.

Cover Letters for Advertised Listings

1. Research the employer

Research the prospective employer's organization to see how your skills and abilities meet the organization's needs, and how well your values match those promoted by the organization. In your cover letter, show why you are a good fit. Send the letter to a specific person whenever possible; otherwise, use "Dear Hiring Manager" or "Dear Human Resources Manager."

2. Analyze the job description

Take a good look at the job responsibilities and qualifications and design your cover letter to match these as much as you can. Often job listings are short and vague. In this case, draw from your research of similar jobs to infer what skills and abilities might be required. For instance, if you were looking for a job with a bank, it would be appropriate to mention courses and past experience related to finance.

3. Analyze your background

Think about your background in relation to the job responsibilities and qualifications. Ask yourself, "What have I done that is similar to what this job entails?" Consider courses taken, classroom projects, past work experience, summer jobs, internships, volunteer experience, extracurricular involvement (on- and off-campus) and travel.

Beyond Advertised Listings

Networking and research leads

You will also write cover letters to employers that you identify in your independent job search. Through networking or research, you will learn of specific openings or job titles that interest you. Be sure to indicate in the first paragraph what position you're seeking. If a specific person alerted you to the job opening, include that person's name and professional affiliation (e.g., "Professor Jane Seymore in Cal Poly's Civil Engineering Department suggested I contact you about your Sanitary Engineer opening"). Employers receive many letters and resumes. They are more likely to read letters that mention specific people they know.

Letters of Inquiry

If you are asking about possible job opportunities, you are sending a letter of inquiry. Address your letter to a specific individual, usually the person who supervises the functional area where you'd like to work. Be as specific as possible about the type of position that interests you. Ideally, your research will reveal the job titles used by this employer. If not, use commonly understood generic job titles in the field. The more specific you are, the clearer it will be that you've done your homework and that you know what the employer needs and what you have to offer.

Emailed Cover Letters

When applying for employment via email, write your cover letter in the body of an email message. Make sure you include a signature with your email address and phone number. Include the title of the position you are applying for in the subject line of your message. Use a simple font and remove the fancy formatting. Send the message to yourself first to test that the formatting works. If everything looks good, resend to the employer. Make sure you spell check and check your grammar and capitalization. They are just as important in an email cover letter as in paper cover letters.

COVER LETTER DOS & DON'TS

Do

- Use paper that matches your resume
- Write an original cover letter for each employer and position
- State in the first sentence why you are writing
- Show that you know your career goals and how they relate to the position and the organization
- Demonstrate originality and enthusiasm
- Make your points succinctly; every point should support your application
- Proofread for typos and accuracy of address and telephone numbers
- Run Spell Check on your computer before you print your final copy, but remember it cannot detect the wrong form of the word or a homonym
- Print envelopes using a computer printer
- Keep copies of all materials for your records
- Follow up with the employer - if you don't hear back after a couple of weeks, inquire if any further information is needed and reiterate your interest

Don't

- Make the letter more than one page
- Use generic, all-purpose cover letters – never copy cover letters
- Exaggerate your skills or experience

Cover Letter

Suggested Content & Layout

The following is intended as a guide. Cover letters should be unique and original.

Your street address
City, State Zip Code
Email address
(Area Code) Phone Number

Month Date, Year

Mr./Ms./Dr. First and Last Name of Person
Position or Title
Employer/Organization's Name
Employer Street Address/P.O. Box
City, State Zip Code

Dear Mr./Ms./Dr. Last Name of Addressee:

Tell the reader why you are writing (i.e., regarding the position in which you are interested; if appropriate, indicate how you learned of the position and/or organization). Make a general statement about being a good candidate for the job.

Explain why you have targeted this particular organization: in so doing, demonstrate your knowledge of its products, services and operations. (This means you must research the potential employer.) Stress what you have to offer, not what you want from, the employer. Identify those parts of your experience (paid or non-paid) which will be of interest to this employer. Students and recent graduates should draw attention to relevant course work, special projects and campus activities. In some cases, you will add detail to items.

Demonstrate your understanding of the duties of the position in which you are interested, and state how your unique qualifications fit the position. Request an interview appointment, or tell the reader that you will contact him/her soon in order to see if you can schedule a mutually convenient appointment. If the employer is some distance away, indicate when you would be available for an interview. (For example, if you will be traveling to the employer's location during an academic holiday, indicate the days you will be in that area.) Thank the reader for his/her time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Sign your name here

Type your name

Enclosure

Following are sample introductory paragraphs for cover letters. Please note: they are intended to serve as examples, not to be copied verbatim.

- At the suggestion of Jaime Wilson, I am submitting my resume for a position in the GNC Components and Integration Group at the Dulles, VA location. With a solid education from Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo, I am seeking an entry-level Aerospace Engineering position with Orbital Sciences Corporation.
- My commitment to bringing history alive for students, my extensive hands-on work at the State Department, and the knowledge that I gained as an honors History student at Cal Poly - San Luis Obispo, prompt me to apply for the Lucia Mar School District's high school social studies teaching position listed on Edjoin.org. I am confident that my lesson-planning abilities, classroom management skills, and engaging teaching style will greatly support Lucia Mar's tradition of academic excellence.

Following are sample middle paragraphs for cover letters.

- I took a number of laboratory based classes while at Cal Poly, designing, developing, and implementing tests in a number of aerospace related subjects. I have experimented in Cal Poly's wind tunnels (subsonic, supersonic, and water), as well as the propulsion test cell, and composites laboratory. The grading standard for Cal Poly lab reports is industry quality, giving me professional level experience in report organization and formatting. I have also used LabView software in conjunction with experiments as a means of data collection. When it comes to testing, I have a persistent work ethic and do not get discouraged easily.
- As an intern I became familiar with the programs Family Care Network offers, the services you provide, the families you serve, and the philosophy behind your organization. I believe my experience and values would make me a strong contributor to the FCNI team. Over the past seven years, I have sought out opportunities to work with at-risk populations. I have been able to develop practical skills and gain experience working with children and youth in preschools, camps, U.S. urban areas, and in Africa. My Child Development degree has given me an academic foundation with the theoretical background necessary to work effectively in this field. After completing my senior research project on resiliency in children, I believe more than ever in the work that FCNI is doing and the potential it has to make meaningful changes in the lives of children and families.

Following are sample ending paragraphs for cover letters.

- I have attached my resume for your review. I will be contacting you within two weeks to set up a time to further discuss my qualifications for entry-level positions with Project Management Advisors, Inc. Thank you very much for your time, and I look forward to meeting with the representatives of your company in the near future.
- Enclosed is my resume, and I look forward to discussing my qualifications with you. I will call you in a week to confirm receipt of this information and discuss possible next steps. Thank you very much for your time and consideration.

Sample Cover Letters

Jordan Miller

1111 Madonna Rd. • San Luis Obispo, CA 93405 • (805) 544-1234
jnmiller@calpoly.edu

February 28, 2007

Lewis Global Public Relations
575 Market St. Suite 2550
San Francisco, CA 94105

Dear Hiring Manager:

It is with great enthusiasm that I submit my resume for your public relations and marketing internship currently advertised on the Lewis Global PR website. I have been interested in your company since I discovered in the San Francisco Business Journal that you are one of the fastest growing public relations companies in San Francisco. As a senior at California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo working on a Communications Studies degree and Spanish minor, I plan to pursue a career in public relations and marketing.

My public relations projects, communications-based coursework, Spanish proficiency, and enthusiasm for the field have prepared me for this internship. I am currently working with the NCAA Division 1 Athletic Department on campus to promote attendance at women's basketball games. This experience has given me the opportunity to apply marketing tactics and develop strategies to create a successful campaign. My communications coursework has taught me about the processes and effects of communication, and has prepared me to enter public relations with strong verbal and written communication skills. My Spanish proficiency would be non-existent had it not been for my year in Spain which also gave me an understanding and appreciation of other cultures and the global markets that they operate in. All these facets to my education have molded my understanding and interest in public relations, and have paved the way for my career into the field.

Enclosed is my resume for your review. I will be in the San Francisco area for the week of March 26th, and would be excited to arrange an interview with you to discuss the internship opportunity. Of course, I am also available at your convenience. Thank you very much for your time, and I look forward to meeting you soon.

Sincerely

Jordan Miller

Enclosure

555 Islay Street
San Luis Obispo, CA 93401
08.26.07

Joseph Elliot Design Associates, Inc.
2359 4th Avenue #300
San Diego, CA 92101

Dear Mr. Elliot:

I am impressed with the diversity of services your firm offers to its clients including interior design, landscape architecture, and most notably commercial, high-rise architecture. I have seen your buildings in the San Diego area and especially like the new Law Library in La Jolla because of its architectural beauty and sustainability. I am interested in a summer internship position and would greatly value the opportunity to work with your professional staff of architects and designers.

I am completing my first year of Architecture at Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo and have computer skills using Photoshop, Form Z, and Freehand. I have experience in hand drafting and sketching, and am currently working on projects involving model building and drawing.

I look forward to talking with you soon and will contact you within the next week. Please contact me anytime at 619.318.2055 or cclayton@calpoly.edu. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Calli Clayton

Sample Email Cover Letter

Date: Tues, 15 May 2007 19:52:59 -0700 (EDT)
From: john watkins [jwatkins@yahoo.com]
To: susan.jones@elililly.com
Subject: Experienced Sales Rep for Pharmaceutical Primary Care Sales Representative (50281707)

Dear Ms. Jones,

Having broken sales records and exceeded sales quotas in my previous positions and recently completed my Bachelor's degree in Business Administration with a concentration in Marketing, I am an ideal candidate for the Pharmaceutical Primary Care Sales Representative position with Eli Lilly and Company. I found the position on Mustang Jobs on the Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo website.

As the leading sales representative for Campus Tours, I developed key sales material, trained new sales reps, and reinvented the way college vacation tours are sold. My team's revenue was more than double the average for the entire operation.

The pharmaceutical industry is dynamic and growing, and I am convinced I can apply my sales background and business education effectively, contributing to Eli Lilly's success.

I would appreciate the chance to meet with you to discuss ways I can contribute to your sales team. I will contact you in the next 10 days to arrange an interview. Should you have any questions before that time, please feel free to call me at 805-756-1111 or email me. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Cordially,

John Watkins



Sample Thank You Letter

Marianne Boles

400C Hunter Ridge • San Luis Obispo, CA 93405 • (805) 544-1111
mboles@calpoly.edu

October 26, 2007

Ms. Glenna Wright
Human Resources Manager
Fashion Department Store
2000 Line Drive
Fairfax, VA 22030

Dear Ms. Wright:

I enjoyed interviewing with you during your recruiting visit to Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo on October 25. The management trainee program you outlined sounds both challenging and rewarding, and I look forward to your decision concerning an on-site visit.

As mentioned during the interview, I will be graduating in December with a Bachelor's degree in Business Administration with a double concentration in Management and Marketing. Through my education and work experience I have gained many skills, as well as an understanding of retailing concepts and dealing with the general public. I have worked for seven years in the retail industry in various positions from Sales Clerk to Assistant Department Manager. I think my education and work experience would complement Fashion's management trainee program.

I have enclosed a copy of my college transcript and a list of references that you requested.

Thank you again for the opportunity to interview with Fashion Department Store. The interview served to reinforce my strong interest in becoming a part of your management team. I can be reached at (805) 544-1111 or by email at mboles@calpoly.edu should you need additional information.

Sincerely,

Marianne Boles

Enclosures