

WRITING APPLICATION LETTER

An application letter is merely another name for a cover letter, the official business letter often included with a job application and/or resume and sent to a prospective employer. Although application letters are generally considered optional components of applying for a job, more and more frequently, employers are singling out those who actually take the time to write an application letter as their top picks.

A COVER LETTER...

- Is always included with emailed, online, or mailed résumés. It is NOT used when you “show up” in person with your résumé, whether in someone’s office or at a job fair. In those cases, YOU are your cover letter; you’ll say the same information out loud. It would be weird for them to read the letter while you stand there.
- Highlights specific information from your resume and background that applies to a specific posted position or a specific “possibly open” position.

THE EMPLOYER'S ADDRESS, NAME AND SALUTATION

With advertised openings, you will sometimes be instructed to mail your information to an office, or a title, such as the Director of Human Resources. In this case, you need not find the name of the individual to whom you are writing. You can address the letter to "Dear Director", or "Dear Human Resources Department", or you can simply omit both the salutation (Dear _____,) and the closing (Sincerely,) from the letter.

Still, if you can get the name of the appropriate person, it will be to your benefit, differentiating you from the other candidates. If the gender of the person is unclear (e.g., Kim, Pat) your salutation can omit the Mr. or Ms. title (i.e., “Dear Kim Anderson,”).

THE FIRST PARAGRAPH

Length: Two or three sentences.

Content: This paragraph introduces who you are and why you are writing to the employer. Be sure to:

- Start with a sentence in which you focus on the employer’s needs. Be as specific as you can about the position desired.
- Identify the position for which you are applying and tell how you heard about the opening (website, contact person, etc.).
- Explain why you are writing (Would you like to be considered for the position? Has your academic and/or employment background prepared you for this position?).

For example:

1. I am applying for your part-time sales position which was posted on Capital University’s job website. I am currently a sophomore, and am majoring in Marketing.
2. I am applying for your Sales Trainee position which was posted on Capital University’s job website. You indicate a need for a recent graduate with a background

in business and sales. I will graduate in May with a Bachelor's degree in Business Administration, and I have held part-time sales positions throughout college.

3. During the last two years, my editing position with our school newspaper has provided me with experience related to the Proofreader position which was advertised on your company website. I will graduate from Capital University in May with a Bachelor's degree in English, and I plan to enter the field of publishing.

4. I am very interested in the position of Customer Service Representative with Orgo-gro. Mark Muggli, a systems analyst with your company, recently informed me of two openings in this division.

If you are a student with related employment experience, you may want to mention your experience instead of your degree in the first paragraph:

5. I am especially interested in the Loan Officer position which was advertised in the Columbus Dispatch on November 8. I have several years of experience in banking, including significant exposure to loans and mortgages.

THE SECOND PARAGRAPH

Length: Three to five sentences.

Content: In this paragraph, you will emphasize a match between the skills which you possess and those which are required by the employer. Use the advertisement to guide your writing and include:

- Your qualifications for the job, as they relate to those listed by the employer. These qualifications will probably be a combination of your education and your work experience.
- How each of these has prepared you for the position/field that you want to enter.
- Possible reference to current or previous employment, specific courses that you took, aspects of jobs or internships that you had, etc., that relate to this position or are included in the position description.
- If you are under-qualified for the advertised position, you can either avoid any mention of your lack of qualifications, or include a statement about related experience. Remember that the advertisement is often a "wish list" and that you might not need all of the qualifications that are listed.
- Make some reference to your attached or enclosed resume (pay attention to whether you are attaching through email or enclosing through US Mail). Some options are:

1. My attached resume will give you a better view of my skills and abilities.
2. Please see my enclosed resume for more information.
3. Please see my attached resume for a more complete view of my background and qualifications.

If you have both academic qualifications and career-related work experience, you may want to separate this paragraph into two paragraphs. By doing this, you can focus on each of these subjects individually.

THE THIRD PARAGRAPH

Length: Two or three sentences.

Content: This is the paragraph in which you tell the employer how to get in touch with you, and thank the person for taking time to give you consideration. Some examples are:

1. Should you need additional information, you can reach me at 614-236-0000 or ccollege@capital.edu. Thank you for your consideration, and I look forward to hearing from you soon.
2. I am available for an interview during (list dates or months or whenever you are available). You can reach me at (614) 555-1212 from 3:00 p.m.-7:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. I look forward to hearing from you.
3. I am excited about the possibility of working for Orgo-gro. Should you need more information, you can reach me by phone at (614) 555-8989 or by e-mail at sstudent@capital.edu. I am available for an interview at your convenience.
4. I believe that my student teaching experience and academic background will be a benefit to the Wellington School. Should you need additional information, you can reach me at (614) 555-1234. Thank you for your time, and I look forward to hearing from you soon.

“ATTACHMENT” VS. “ENCLOSURE”

Usually you send a cover letter along with your resume, and sometimes you may have additional documents to send (such as a list of references, reference letters, writing samples, etc.). The word “attachment” at the bottom of the letter is used to indicate there is a document (or documents) you are sending with your cover letter.

When sending your documents... By MAIL: Use the word “enclosure” or “enclosures” at the bottom of your letter

By EMAIL or ONLINE APPLICATIONS: Use the word “attachment” or “attachments”.

When sending: Only your resume and cover letter, write: attachment OR enclosure
 When there are more documents than your resume, indicate the number of documents you are sending in addition to your cover letter.

For example, if you send your resume and list of references, write: attachments (2)
OR enclosures (2)

LETTER OF APPLICATION: FOLLOW UP

If you respond to an advertised opening, you can expect to wait anywhere from a week to more than a month for a response. Why? Human Resource departments are very busy, and sometimes things get put on the back burner.

By the second week, you're feeling as if no one likes you and you're wondering if you should call to inquire about the status of your file. In general, resist the temptation to call. There are hundreds of resumes along with yours, and if each of those people called, it would begin to get annoying. An exception might be the fields of sales and journalism, in which you are expected to be more aggressive in your approach. Some sales recruiters say that they only consider those who persistently call!

Instead, you might want to send a follow-up email or letter. This type of correspondence is appropriate in two circumstances:

1. If something new came up (like you'll be gone for a while and won't be able to interview during that time)
2. If you simply want to remind them that you are still interested, without being pushy. It's a nice way of ensuring that they received your resume and cover letter while giving them a positive impression of you.

LETTER OF INQUIRY

Purpose: In this type of letter, you inquire about the possibility of available positions. Since you are not responding to an advertisement, the first paragraph will not make reference to one, as it did in the letter of application. Instead you will want to refer to what has prompted you to write the letter - an article you have read in the paper, someone you have talked with in the field, personal knowledge that the company hires people with your qualifications, etc... The second paragraph will probably take on a slightly more general tone, since you will not be responding to specific listed qualifications. Finally, you will need to be more assertive in your approach. This is most obvious in the last paragraph.

NOTE: In most cases, this type of letter will be used when someone has referred you or if you know there is a job available through your networking or research. This is not to be used for a mass mailing of letters and resumes.

Format: The basic pieces of the letter of inquiry are the same as a letter of application:

- Your address, date
- The employer's name, organization, and address
- A greeting line (Dear Mr. _____,)
- Three paragraphs
- A closing with your name
- Indication of any attachments or enclosures

THE EMPLOYER'S NAME

In a letter of inquiry, you should ALWAYS use a specific person's name. You'll call that person at a later date, and you have to ask for him or her. It is easy to get the

name and title of the person to whom you should send your resume and cover letter, if you don't already have the employer's name.

You will have the most success if you call the main number for the company or organization and ask the person who answers the phone if he or she can give you the name (gender, if necessary) and title of the person to whom you would direct a letter regarding possible employment. Also ask for the spelling of the person's name.

You can also try to find the person's name by searching on LinkedIn.

THE FIRST PARAGRAPH

Length: Three to four sentences.

Content: Instead of mentioning an advertisement, you will explain briefly why you are interested in working for this company and what has prompted your letter. These statements are important, as they provide the best opportunity for you to personalize the letter. In this paragraph you should explain:

- What position(s) you are applying for.
- Why they should consider you.
- What has prompted you to write the letter.
- Why you are interested in working for them.
- You may want to mention your current educational status, and month/year of graduation and/or if you already have experience in the field here.

First Paragraph Examples:

1. I am writing to inquire about social work positions with the Franklin County Mental Health Board. I recently read an article in the Columbus Dispatch which indicated that you are seeking to establish a number of treatment teams to assist the mentally ill in managing their lives. I am excited about the possibility of securing one of these positions, because I am extremely interested in working with this population.

2. During a recent conversation with Professor Joe Fasby, my faculty advisor in the Accounting department at Capital University, we discussed the possibility of several upcoming openings for auditors at Ernst & Young. Professor Fasby has worked for Ernst & Young in the past and feels that my education and experience would make me a good match for this type of position. I will graduate from Capital University in May with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Accounting.

THE SECOND PARAGRAPH

Length: Three to five sentences.

Content: This can be the same as the second paragraph in the letter of application. The difference is that you are not responding to the qualifications of a specific position opening. Rather, you are giving the reader a general overview of your background. You are telling the reader what you think she or he wants to hear about you, based on the nature of the positions for which you are expressing an interest.

THE THIRD PARAGRAPH

Length: Two to three sentences.

Content: This paragraph becomes more assertive than the third paragraph in the letter of application. You must contact the person to whom you are addressing the letter, since there is a very small chance that this person will rush to call you immediately after receiving your letter and resume.

Examples:

1. I would appreciate the opportunity to discuss these positions with you. I will call during the week of April 10 to inquire further. If this is inconvenient, you can reach me by calling 614-555-2324 after 6:00 p.m. or by e-mail at college@gmail.com. Thank you for your consideration.

2. I look forward to discussing summer internship opportunities with you. I can be reached at 614555-2324. If I do not hear from you by February 8, I will call you to follow up on my interest.

These examples might seem pushy or forward to you. They might have been considered pushy if you indicated the date and time that you expected the person to be available for your phone call, but you're not doing that. Instead, you're providing a time frame, as well as an alternative to talking with you. That's being polite, not pushy.

Application letters

EXAMPLE A

Your name

Your address

Date

Name of Contact at Company

Company Name (ABC)

123 ABC St

SOUTH BRISBANE 4101

Dear Sir/Madam, (person's name if you know it)

Re: position applying for

I am writing to express my interest in the position you have advertised for a (name position) and where advertised eg, in The Courier Mail on (date you saw the advertisement) e.g. 23 October 2006.

My previous experience in the (mention related experience from workplace) has given me excellent workplace skills which would be an asset to (name company you are writing to).

I am honest, reliable, friendly and easy to get along with, as well as being a quick learner. I possess excellent communication skills and I am well presented.

Due to my previous experience in the (name industry) I believe any employer would strongly benefit from my employment.

Please find enclosed a copy of my current resume. I can be contacted on 0400 000 000 , to discuss this opportunity further.

Thank you for considering my application and I look forward to meeting with you soon.

Yours faithfully (if name not known),

or

Yours sincerely (if name is known)

[Sign here]

Your name

EXAMPLE B

Your name

Your address

Date

Name of person you are applying to

Company name

Address

Dear Sir / Madam

My name is and I am currently attending year 12 at ABC College. I am looking to commence a traineeship in the industry as a school-based apprentice.

I have been gathering my skills in the industry through work experience and casual employment as you will note in my resume. I can offer an employer honesty and reliability and a commitment to learning the necessary skills to succeed within this field of work. I have very good communication skills and demonstrated my qualities as a valuable employee through my past work placements. I am a (insert a quality you have) person and would enjoy working in your company as part of a team, or in an autonomous role.

Please find attached my current resume that gives further details on my skills and experience. I can be contacted on 0400 000 000 to arrange a suitable time for an interview.

Thank you for considering my application and I look forward to meeting with you soon.

Yours faithfully (if name not known),

or

Yours sincerely (if name is known)

[Sign Here]

Your name

GOOD APPLICATION LETTER

By: Fred Winston

May 2, 1996

Dr. Welcome Bender
Department of Biological Chemistry and Molecular Pharmacology
Harvard Medical School
Boston, MA 02115

Dear Dr. Bender,

I am currently a graduate student in Greg Mendel's lab at the U. of Brünn and I am writing to inquire about the possibility of a postdoctoral position in your laboratory. I plan on graduating in June, 2004 and I would be interested in beginning between June-September, 2004.

My graduate work has focused on the inheritance patterns of certain traits in the pea *Pisum sativum*. Since peas have many traits that differ between different true-breeding plants, and since peas can both cross-fertilize and self-fertilize, this has been a good system for studying inheritance. My work has suggested that the inheritance of genetic traits follows two general rules. First, two members of a gene pair segregate from each other into the gametes. Second, during gamete formation, the segregation of alleles of one gene is independent of the segregation of alleles of another gene. This work will soon be published by the Natural History Society of Brünn.

During the course of my graduate work, I have become very interested in *Drosophila* developmental biology. I have been especially intrigued by studies of the Polycomb complex and how it represses gene expression during development. Thus, I am quite interested in the work going on in your laboratory.

I am planning a visit to the United States sometime early this summer. If possible, I would like to visit your lab at that time. I would be happy to present a seminar on my work.

Enclosed is a copy of my CV. I have asked my three references to send you letters on my behalf. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely yours,

Hugo de Vries

BAD APPLICATION LETTER

May 2, 1996

Dr. Welcome Bender
Department of BCMP
Harvard Medical School
Boston, MA 02115

Dear Dr. Bender,

I am currently a graduate student in Greg Mendel's lab at the U. of Brünn, where I have been studying segregation and independent assortment of genetic traits. I plan to graduate next month and I am interested in your line of research. Therefore, I am applying for a postdoctoral position in your lab. My CV is enclosed. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely yours,

Hugo de Vries

Tips on writing an Application Letter

Writing a Job Application

Your application is the first contact you will have with an employer. It is also your chance to make a good first impression as the employer will use it to help decide if you are suitable for the job and if they would like to give you an interview. It is most important to take time and care with your application. Make sure that it looks professional, has a clean layout, is spell checked and is easy to read. Make sure you use paper that is size A4.

The Application Letter

There are many ways you can write a letter for a job, however, your address, phone number and the date must be on the letter. Always address the letter to the person named in the ad. If there is no name mentioned write Sir/Madam or phone the company and get the correct name. When you write the letter put in the following information.

- Contents
- Refer to the job and where and when you saw it advertised.
- Put in any information about work you have done before.
- Give your telephone number in the letter.
- Close your letter by saying how suitable you are for the job.
- If your letter starts with Sir/Madam, always end with Yours faithfully. If you start with a person's name end Yours sincerely.
- Sign your name and have your name printed underneath.

Things to Remember

- Before writing an application, research the job and find out as much as you can about the company.
- Make a draft plan first with what you want to put in your application.
- Write it as many times as you want until you get it right.
- Always check spelling and watch your grammar. Get someone to proof read it for mistakes before you send it.
- Write neatly, but get it typed if you can.
- Make sure you use clean A4 size paper.
- Always send copies of everything, except the application letter.
- Tell the people who wrote you a reference you are being interviewed before you go.
- Keep a copy of your application.
- Make a number of copies of your résumé and send one off each time you apply for a job.
- Keep your résumé up to date.

Your covering letter is an important document - a key part of your application to a prospective employer. It is surprising that jobseekers often pay scant attention to it. Many candidates fail even to write one and only submit their CV or application form. Craft a strong covering letter and your application could really stand out from the crowd. So if it's of such importance you'll need to know how to produce the perfect covering letter.

1. Always send one!

The covering letter's job is actually two fold. At its basic level, the standard one-page covering letter performs a simple courtesy function. It is a socially acceptable way of introducing you and explaining which vacancy you're applying for or which area you are enquiring about. It also provides the recruiter with a handy list of your contact details.

2. Don't rewrite your CV

It should provide edited, juicy highlights from your CV. But it should not merely repeat what the CV includes but rather distils the key themes into one place.

3. First Paragraph and last line

Don't waffle in your first paragraph, make the reason you're writing clear and sell yourself; writing what makes you better than others straight off. Finish with a call to action, request they contact you for a meeting or interview and let them know you will be in touch to discuss.

4. Talk about the company

Do some research into the company/ organisation and include information about them. Specifically tell them what you are impressed with and what attracts you to them.

5. Provide quality evidence of your qualities

Pick out the top 3 or 5 (max) qualities the employer is seeking in their advert or job specification if there is one. These should be qualities that you have already covered in your CV.

And they should be the 3 to 5 things that you refer to - not explain - briefly in your covering letter. Provide concrete examples and solid numbers wherever you can. For example, after you've introduced yourself in your letter you could include lines similar to these:

"You will see from my enclosed CV that I match your requirements precisely. I have worked in the Web industry for over 10 years and have led a number of development teams that have ranged in size from 5 to 20 people."

Or

"You will see from my CV that I have worked in both the USA and Canada and have worked in senior positions on aerospace contracts ranging from £15m to £180m"

Your covering letter then is an additional 'sales' document...selling you

6. Reflect your personality

Ensure the letter shows how motivated and enthusiastic you are. Do not include negative comments. Try to use dynamic acting verbs for each skill you are explaining, such as:

Research - Analysed, clarified

People skills - Collaborated, communicated

Teaching - Instilled, motivated

7. Relevant and brief

A well written letter should draw the recruiter's eye to relevant experience on your CV. It is a, admittedly brief, space in which you draw a positive pen-picture of you in the mind of the employer. Ensure it is never more than a page long.

8. Contact details

Where ever possible send your letter and CV to a named individual, particularly if it is more of an enquiry than a specific role application. Research using websites, ask friends and colleagues if they know of anyone or ring through to reception and get yourself a name and job title. It will look a lot better than sir/ madam.

9. Sign the letter

Unless you've had to sign an application form, your covering letter is the only place where you provide your signature. This may seem old fashioned in this digital age but it's still a strong signal of your authenticity.

10. Neatness/ presentation

Finally, make sure your covering letter is clearly laid out with no typos or spelling errors. Do this and, compared to many jobseekers, you'll already stand out as an impressive candidate!

CONCLUSION

A job application letter, also known as a cover letter, should be sent or uploaded with your resume when applying for jobs. While your resume offers a history of your work experience and an outline of your skills and accomplishments, the job application letter you send to an employer explains why you are qualified for the position and should be selected for an interview.

How to Get Started

Before you begin writing your job application letter, do some groundwork. Consider what information you want to include (keeping in mind that space is limited). Remember, this letter is making a case for your candidacy for the position. But you can do better than just regurgitating your resume — instead, highlight your most relevant skills, experiences, and abilities.

To include the most convincing, relevant details in your letter, you'll need to know what the employer wants. The biggest clues are within the job advertisement, so spend some time decoding the job ad. Next, match your qualifications with the employer's wants and needs. Make a list of your relevant experience and skills. For instance, if the job ad calls for a strong leader, think of examples of when you've successfully led a team. Once you've jotted down some notes, and have a sense of what you want to highlight in your letter, you're ready to get started writing.

Writing Guidelines for Job Application Letters

Writing a job application letter is very different from a quick email to a friend or a thank-you note to a relative. Hiring managers and potential interviewers have certain expectations when it comes to the letter's presentation and appearance, from length (no more than a page) to font size and style to letter spacing:

Length: A letter of application should be no more than one page long.

Format and Page Margins: A letter of application should be single-spaced with a space between each paragraph. Use about 1" margins and align your text to the left, which is the standard alignment for most documents.

Font: Use a traditional font such as Times New Roman, Arial, or Calibri. The font size should be between 10 and 12 points.

What to Include in Each Section of the Letter

There are also set rules for the sections included in the letter, from salutation to sign-off, and how the letter is organized. Here's a quick lowdown on the main sections included in a job application letter:

Heading: A letter of application should begin with both your and the employer's contact information (name, address, phone number, email) followed by the date. If this is an email rather than an actual letter, include your contact information at the end of the letter, after your signature.

- Header Examples

Salutation: This is your polite greeting. The most common salutation is "Dear Mr./Ms." followed by the person's last name. Find out more about appropriate cover letter salutations, including what to do if you don't know the person's name, or are unsure of a contact's gender.

Body of the letter: Think of this section as being three distinct parts.

In the **first paragraph**, you'll want to mention the job you are applying for and where you saw the job listing.

The **next paragraph(s)** are the most important part of your letter. Remember how you gathered all that information about what employers were seeking, and how you could meet their needs? This is where you'll share those relevant details on your experience and accomplishments.

The **third and last part of the body of the letter** will be your thank you to the employer; you can also offer follow-up information.

Complimentary Close: Sign off your email with a polite close, such as "Best" or "Sincerely," followed by your name.

- Closing Examples

Signature: End with your signature, handwritten, followed by your typed name. If this is an email, simply include your typed name, followed by your contact information.

- Signature Examples

Simple Formatting Using a Template

Overwhelmed by all these formatting and organization requirements? One way to make the process of writing a job application easier is to use a job application letter template to create your own personalized job application letters for applying for a job. Having a template can help save you time if you are sending a lot of application letters. Do be sure that each letter you send is personalized to the company and position.

Tips for Writing an Effective Letter

- **Always write one.** Unless a job posting specifically says not to send a letter of application or cover letter, you should always send one. Even if the company does not request a letter of application, it never hurts to include one. If they do ask you to send a letter, make sure to follow the directions exactly (for example, they might ask you to send the letter as an email attachment, or type it directly into their online application system). Following application directions is the first step to getting selected for an interview.
- **Use business letter format.** Use a formal business letter format when writing your letter. Include your contact information at the top, the date, and the employer's contact information. Be sure to provide a salutation at the beginning, and your signature at the end.
- **Sell yourself.** Throughout the letter, focus on how you would benefit the company. Provide specific examples of times when you demonstrated skills or abilities that would be useful for the job, especially those listed in the job posting or description. If possible, include examples of times when you added value to a company. Numerical values offer concrete evidence of your skills and accomplishments.
- **Use keywords.** Reread the job listing, circling any keywords (such as skills or abilities that are emphasized in the listing). Try to include some of those words in your cover letter. This will help the employer see that you are a strong fit for the job.
- **Keep it brief.** Keep your letter under a page long, with no more than about four paragraphs. An employer is more likely to read a concise letter.
- **Edit, edit, edit.** Employers are likely to overlook an application with a lot of errors. Therefore, read through your cover letter, and if possible ask a friend or career counselor to review the letter. Proofread for any grammar or spelling errors.