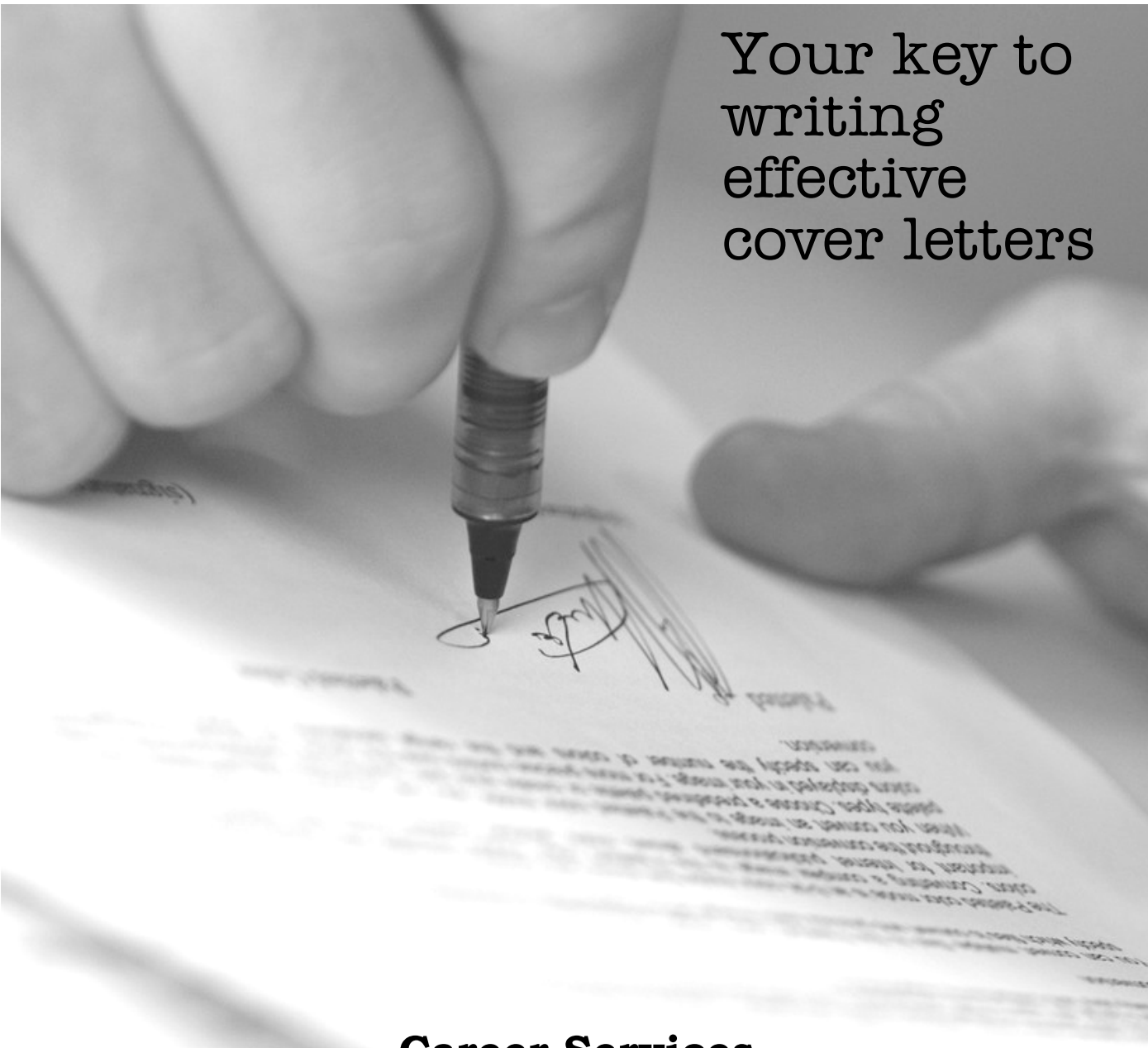


Cover Letters That Work

A black and white photograph showing a close-up of a hand holding a pen, writing a signature on a document. The document has some faint, illegible text and a circular stamp or mark. The background is blurred.

Your key to
writing
effective
cover letters

Career Services

DIVISION OF STUDENT SUCCESS, C.W. POST CAMPUS OF LONG ISLAND UNIVERSITY
Kumble Hall, 720 Northern Blvd., Brookville, NY 11548
516.299.2251 www.liu.edu/pep

Cover Letters That Work

Revised 2007

**All information in this publication © Career Services,
C.W. Post Campus of Long Island University**

**All rights reserved. No copies of this publication may be made without consent
of Career Services.**

Preface

Welcome!

This handbook will take you through the steps of composing effective cover letters and follow-up letters. As with a resume, there is no one correct way to write a cover letter or follow-up letter. However, certain guidelines and tips can be helpful in putting thoughts to paper in a way that will grab your prospective employer's attention. We will give examples of each type of letter. This handbook will also discuss the composition of follow-up and thank you letters. Follow-up and thank you letters are sent after an interview.

Before we continue, we need to dispel a myth about the cover letter. Cover letters are not optional. Employers expect them whenever you send, fax or otherwise transmit your resume.

Therefore, take your cover letter, and all job search correspondence, seriously. Your communication skills will be assessed based on these letters. If you find letters difficult to write, please consider taking a course in writing or find related books that can help you compose written material. A good reference to have on hand is Strunk and White's classic, *The Elements of Style*. This book is inexpensive, small and illustrates tips on grammar, punctuation, and writing style.

Your cover letter, like your resume, is a representation of *you*. You will want to make the best impression possible.

THE COVER LETTER

The Beginning

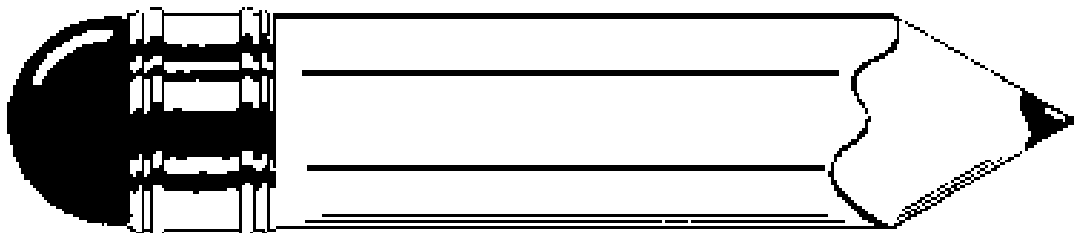
To begin the cover letter writing process you:

MUST collect these pieces of information:

1. Your address and the date.
2. The titles of the person to whom you will write, the organization's name, and full address.
3. The name of your network contact, the newspaper and date of newspaper issue, or other information regarding how you know about the position.
4. Information that impresses you about the company. The best cover letters demonstrate your familiarity and interest in the organization. You can research the organization by reviewing company literature, newspapers, or web sites.
5. Your specific training, skills, achievements, and qualifications as they apply to the position.

TRY to collect these pieces of information:

1. The name of the position.
2. The name of the person in the organization who manages the hiring for the job you want.

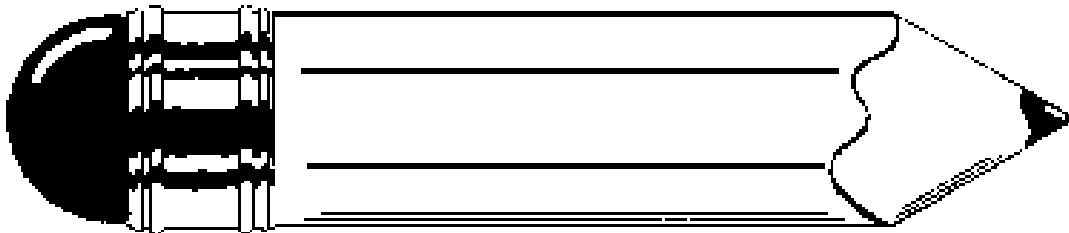


COVER LETTER TIPS

1. Address your cover letter to a named individual. This will give your letter and resume a greater chance of getting to the correct person and less of a chance of ending up in a low priority pile. If you absolutely cannot obtain the name of the person to whom you are sending the resume, do not use gender-biased salutations (i.e., "Dear Sir or Dear Madam"). Address the letter to the Human Resources Manager, the Director, or to whoever seems appropriate in the organization to which you are writing.
2. Project confidence, but **DON'T** be arrogant, negative, or too humble. This is probably the hardest task in cover letter composition. Show that you trust your skills and that you understand that you can make a difference in the prospective job. Give examples of your skills and relate the types of things you have learned from certain experiences. Try to stay away from statements like, "I know my skills and abilities will fit into what your company needs." This boastful statement can elicit the employer response, "How does *she* know what *we* need?" A better way to phrase this idea, "I hope to use my skills and abilities to further the goals of your organization."
3. Tailor each cover letter to each position. Make each employer feel special and give the employer the impression that this is *the job* for you.
4. Tell the employer the position for which you would like consideration. This will convey focus on a career. **DON'T** describe your objective in vague terms, for instance, "a people oriented position with growth potential that uses my academic experience and training." This statement conveys nothing.
5. Send a laser printed letter on the same type of paper (preferably, a conservatively colored 22-25 lb. "resume paper") on which you submitted your resume. Purchase matching envelopes.
6. Some Internet applications are providing space for a cover letter. Take advantage of that opportunity. You will either be asked to cut and paste the letter or upload the document.
7. Your letter should answer the question, "Why should I hire this person?"
8. Keep it brief. Three or four paragraphs are sufficient.
9. Use simple, uncomplicated language and sentence structure. Avoid cliches (i.e., "I have taken the liberty of enclosing my resume for your serious consideration...") Use action words and avoid passive voice to create dynamic sentences. **DON'T** send a cover letter containing grammatical errors, misspellings, or smudges.

COVER LETTER TIPS (continued)

10. Be sure the potential employer can reach you. Provide a telephone number where either a person or answering machine (with a professional greeting) will answer all calls.
11. Make a copy of each cover letter for your own records.
12. Feel free to write a company a second time if a reasonable amount of time has passed with no response.
13. Always include a cover letter when faxing or e-mailing a resume. It is also a good idea to include a fax transmittal sheet as well so that you can indicate the number of pages to expect in the event that all pages do not transmit. To ensure that the pages transmit clearly, set the fax machine on fine print mode and be sure your resume and cover letter are on plain white paper. Your e-mailed cover letter can be the body of the e-mail, just remember to follow business style writing.
14. Follow-up your faxed or e-mailed cover letter and resume with a traditional mail version.
15. Sign your letters!!!



Cover Letter Outline

A cover letter should be arranged in 3 or 4 paragraphs with the body of the letter not exceeding 2/3 of a page. Format of the letter should follow current business letter style and the writer's letterhead should match that of the resume.

Paragraph 1:

- State the reason for writing.
Example: I would like to apply for any open positions as a <insert job title>
Example: I would like to apply for the position of <insert job title> advertised in the <date> edition of <publication>
Example: I would like to apply for the position of <insert job title> as posted on <insert Internet job board>, {if available} job # 12345.
- State, in no more than 3 sentences, why you wish to work for the employer. The content should be sincere and a product of research.

Paragraph 2/3:

- Start this paragraph with a statement of mission or motivation to do the work in your chosen field.
- Fill in the rest of this paragraph with statements and explanations of your **relevant**:
 - Skills
 - Qualities
 - Experiences
- The above should support the idea that you are qualified to carry out your mission/motivation for the organization.
- These ideas should be presented **directly** and **in summary** so as to keep the explanation short.
- You may bullet specific accomplishments or unique activities that are highly relevant to the job
- Avoid using phrases like, "I believe..." or, "I hope..." as these phrases dilute your assertiveness and meaning.
- A more assertive approach (especially for higher level business positions) will include:
 - mentioning a WELL RESEASRCHED ISSUE that the company is facing related to the job for which you are applying and;
 - briefly stating an idea that you have to alleviate the problem.

Paragraph 3/4:

- Closing
Example: Thank you for your consideration. I may be reached at xxx.xxx.xxxx if you would like to schedule an interview or if you have any questions.

THE FOLLOW-UP LETTER ...

... AFTER AN INTERVIEW

After an interview, write a follow-up or thank you letter. This letter, as in the previous letter description, solidifies your commitment to acquiring the particular job for which you interviewed. Again, the more the employer sees your name in a positive way, the more you will be remembered.

As with the previous letter, this letter need not be long or formal. It should be addressed to the interviewer, or the head interviewer if you interviewed with more than one on the same day. The letter should:

- Thank the person for the interview
- Re-emphasize your interest in organization and the position
- Rephrase your background and briefly explain how your experience can compliment the requirements of the job
- Indicate that you intend to follow-up the letter with a telephone call to determine if and when the employer wishes to see you again. This last point should be used with caution as this may not always be appropriate.

If the position for which you interviewed is not the position you really want, consider sending a thank you note anyway indicating that. A letter of this kind projects professionalism and politely helps the employers refocus their energies elsewhere. If, after the interview, you are interested in the organization, but not that particular, send a letter stating just that.

... AFTER RECEIVING A REJECTION LETTER

It is a good idea to write a prospective employer a thank you letter for their consideration of your resume if you receive information that there are no positions available. Remember that job hunting is marketing. The more your name is on the employer's desk, in their ear, or on their lips, *in a positive way*, the more they will potentially remember you once a position becomes available. Furthermore, the "thank you for your consideration" letter will be a testament to your commitment to wanting the job and to your professionalism.

This letter need not be long or formal. The letter should:

- Convey your thanks for the employer's consideration
- Re-emphasize your interest in them and the position

SAMPLE LETTERS

FRANK BLACKMAN

12 Millennium Square Smithville, NY 11754 Fblack@internet.com

(516) 299-2251

February 12, 2002

Dr. Thomas J. Meyer
Assistant Superintendent for Human Resources
Hicksville Public Schools
200 Division Avenue
Hicksville, NY 11801-4899

Dear Dr. Meyer:

In response to last week's advertisement in the New York Times for an English Teacher, I have enclosed my resume for your consideration. I was impressed to learn that more than 90% of your students go on to further their education, which is better than the Nassau County average. I would welcome the opportunity to contribute to a district with such a strong reputation.

I recently graduated from Long Island University with a Bachelor's degree in Secondary Education. I am certified to teach both English and Special Education. In addition to fulfilling my student teaching requirement in the Huntington Union Free School District, I participated in a volunteer literacy program to tutor both youth and adults with reading difficulties. I also organized and performed in a variety show at Huntington High School that benefited special needs students.

I would like to meet with you to discuss how my educational background, skills, and experiences can help meet the needs of Hicksville Public Schools. I look forward to hearing from you soon to schedule an interview appointment. In the meantime, if you have any questions, I may be reached at (516) 299-2251.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Frank Blackman

Frank Blackman

Enclosure

Joseph Shmoe
44 Philomena Drive
Franklin Lakes, NY 10054
555.555.5555

November 30, 2006

Ms. Mary Krumbolz
ABC Social Services
2222 Mockingbird Drive
Mineola, NY 11754

Dear Ms. Krumbolz:

I would like to apply for any open positions as a mental health clinician at ABC Social Services. From my research I have found that you are a well respected organization that has been around for more than 20 years serving the citizens of Nassau County. I am impressed by the wide range of services that your facility provides and would welcome the opportunity to be a part of a multidisciplinary team in the service of assisting individuals with mental illness.

My reasons for entering this field come from my own experience of assisting a family member with severe schizophrenia. I found a great satisfaction in being able to assist someone who, in many ways, was unable to assist themselves and have seen the need in the community to become an advocate for others with similar difficulties. I will be graduating with a master's in mental health counseling this coming May. I am an assertive, creative and driven individual who always sees the positive in people.

My past experiences include:

- Volunteering as an advocate for individuals with schizophrenia;
- a 600 hour internship at major mental health facilities in the area;
- individual counseling and group counseling experience;
- and experience creating and presenting psychoeducational programs on mental illness and substance abuse.

Thank you for considering my application. I look forward to hearing from you soon. I can be reached at xxx.xxx.xxxx to schedule an interview appointment or if you have any questions about my credentials or preparation.

Sincerely,

Joseph Shmoe

123 Cherry Lane
Sommerset, NY 12345

March 20, 2002

Ms. Virginia Cole
Manager of Employment
Smith, Roberts, Mitchell and Morelli, LLP
3M Building
100 Centre Street
Wappingers Falls, NY 12345

Dear Ms. Cole:

In researching some of the local public accounting firms, your firm was continually mentioned to me as one of the most admired. I can only surmise that this has something to do with the caliber of people on your staff. I am writing to you today because I would like to be part of an accounting team that prides itself on professional excellence.

This May, I will graduate from the C.W. Post Campus of Long Island University with a Bachelor's degree in accounting. I am seeking an auditing position as my career goals include becoming a Certified Public Accountant. My background includes experience in the areas of accounts receivable, accounts payable, budgeting, invoicing, purchasing, sales and inventory control. Enclosed is my resume, which further details my work experience.

I want to make you aware that I am paralyzed from the waist down and use a wheelchair. This has posed no problems for me at my other positions. I am able to drive my own car, which is equipped with assistive devices. I am familiar with the 3M building and know that it is wheelchair accessible.

I will call your office on Wednesday, March 30th to inquire about the possibility of interviewing with you. Please do not hesitate to contact me at (516) 235-4567 if you desire any additional information.

Very truly yours,

Stuart Foster

Stuart Foster

Enclosure

Samantha Nicole Depardu
54 Green Tree Circle, Southold, NY 11845
(516) 564-5696
depardu@yahoo.com

January 19, 2002

Mr. William Smith, Vice President
Apple Bank
333 Sixth Avenue
New York, NY 10010

Dear Mr. Smith:

Jack Kennedy suggested I get in touch with you regarding a position at Apple Bank.

I am a financial services marketer at Federal International with experience in product development, merchandising, branch management and distribution planning. Highlighted here are some of my recent accomplishments:

- Created Federal's Investment Portfolio, the bank's first complete presentation of its retail savings and investment products.
- Developed successful ways to sell the 'FedAccount' in the retail setting.
- As area director in the New York retail bank, I doubled branch balances in only three years.

I am interested in a new assignment that would take full advantage of my financial services marketing experience. I have enclosed my resume for your review. I will call in a few days to see if we can set up a time to meet. If you would like to contact me before then, you can reach me at (516) 555-1212.

I am looking forward to meeting you.

Cordially,

Samantha Nicole Depardu

Samantha Nicole Depardu

Enclosure

34 Cadillac Drive
East Meadow, NY 11556

May 1, 2002

Ms. Roberta Peterson
Department of Special Services
Juneau, AL 99827

Dear Ms. Peterson:

I believe I am a good fit for the juvenile counselor position you advertised in last week's edition of the *Juneau Record*.

During the past year, I have planned and supervised recreational activities for at-risk teens and co-facilitated group counseling sessions with them.

As my resume indicates, my qualifications closely match your requirements. You seek a recent college graduate. I completed my BA in psychology in May. Your ideal candidate will have experience working with high school students. I participated in internships at both Youth Services of Nassau County and the NY Drug Abuse Prevention Association. You seek an outgoing individual who can demonstrate an attention to detail. I was secretary of the C.W. Post senior class as well as a member of several campus organizations.

My salary requirements are negotiable and I do not anticipate encountering a problem in reaching a mutually agreeable figure. It is my understanding that entry-level positions in counseling typically pay in the upper twenties to low thirties in your part of the country.

I would welcome an interview with you to discuss the contributions I could make to your staff as a juvenile counselor. I plan on being in Juneau visiting family during the month of June. I will take the liberty of calling your office next week to see if we can meet during that time. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Michael McBride

Michael McBride

Enc.

THANK YOU LETTER

231 Libson Avenue
Buffalo, New York 14214

January 12, 2002

Mr. Mike Charles, Manager
General Switch Gear
35 South Castle Rock Road
Buffalo, New York 14260

Dear Mr. Charles:

It was a pleasure to meet and talk with you on Tuesday morning. I appreciate the frank discussion we had about the company and the position.

I have given considerable thought to the problems you described and feel certain that I can produce the results you want in a short time period. My experience in production and design will be extremely valuable in this respect. The broad exposure I gained while assembling and designing relays, starters, motors, and control panels has enabled me to solve many problems requiring adaptations of standard products.

I am extremely interested in the job and convinced that this is just the opportunity I have been seeking. I plan to call you on Thursday afternoon to find out if a decision has been made regarding my candidacy. Again, thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

B. H. Lim

B.H. Lim

8 Harrison Street
Port Jefferson, NY 11857
May 24, 2002

Mr. Frank Kaufman
Manager, Human Resources
Bitterman's, Inc.
New York, NY 10005

The candidate writing this letter received notification that he does not qualify for the position for which he applied. He thanks the interviewer and suggests consideration for a position for which he is more qualified.

Dear Mr. Kaufman:

Thank you for your prompt response to my resume and letter of inquiry regarding a marketing position with Bitterman's. The information you shared about your organization's structure and the types of people you currently seek made a lot of sense to me.

While I do not have the credentials you seek in a marketing professional, I hope I can convince you to consider me for one of the sales positions you mentioned. In that regard, I think I can contribute substantially given my interest in marketing and my prior customer service experience.

In the hopes that you will reconsider me in a sales capacity, I will take the liberty of calling your office next week to see if we can discuss this further.

Thank you again for your consideration.

Cordially,

Jeffrey Margolies

Jeffery Margolies