



Cover Letter Guide

*How to craft effective
cover letters and other job
search correspondences*

Academic & Career Advising

Library Building 2153

360-867-6312

advising@evergreen.edu

CONTENTS

Crafting an Effective Cover Letter	2
Cover Letter Formatting Guide	3
Sample Cover Letters	4
Sample Thank You Letter	7
Importance of Thank You Letters	8

Targeting your cover letter is as important as targeting your résumé

How to Craft an Effective Cover Letter

A well-written cover letter should clearly describe your strengths, ambitions, and goals as they relate to the job for which you are applying. It should express an enthusiasm that will encourage an employer to seek more information about you. It should:

- Link your knowledge, skills and experience to the employer's needs
- Complement your résumé's content by highlighting your unique qualifications that pertain to the job
- Express your individuality

Research

To write an effective cover letter, you must conduct research to clearly understand what the job entails, what the industry/organization is like, and (most importantly) how you will be an asset to the employer. Indicate the unique contributions you can make to the organization. Call attention to your skills and motivation. It's also important to relate something unique you know about the company to show them you've done your research.

Make each letter unique

Each letter needs to be unique to the position. Yes, it is a lot of writing, but targeting your cover letter is as important to getting an interview as targeting your resume. You can make the employer's job easier by clearly describing your strengths and your enthusiasm in your cover letter.

Be specific

Avoid over-used phrases and clichés in describing your qualifications and interest in a position. Too many people have written that they are seeking a "challenging and rewarding position" where they can "work with people." Boring! If you are seeking these attributes in a job, try to rephrase them in new ways. Be specific about the challenges, knowledge, and opportunities you hope to find in the position.

Back up your claims

Try to draw logical connections between the statements you make. For instance, if you say that you understand the goals of the XYZ Corporation and would be good at sales with the company, give specific examples and reasons for thinking so. Reasons could be because you have had prior experience in the industry, because you have done the job before in a different setting, or because you understand the importance of sales to the company's goal of increased growth. In short, back up claims of past or intended success with evidence that you have demonstrated these skills in previous positions.

Engage the reader

Utilizing an active voice and enthusiastic tone attracts an employer's attention. There are no specific rules for creating an active tone to your letter. Reread the letter. If you sound too passive, apologetic, or indifferent, rewrite the letter to capture the reader's attention. Try to engage the reader with your enthusiasm and commitment to the work.

Quick Tips

Use spell-check and a human proofreader. Cut extra words. Keep sentences and paragraphs short. Check for coherence and readability. Read your letter aloud. Be the employer – would you be interested? Let a day pass and re-read. Ask someone else you trust to read it.

COVER LETTER GUIDE

(*) Make cover letter heading consistent with resume heading

Month Day, Year

Name of Specific Person, Title of Person
Address of Person
*Exhaust all measures to find a specific person. Call HR, if necessary,

A cover letter is your first opportunity to introduce yourself to an employer. The purpose of a cover letter is to draw comparisons between your skills and the qualifications for the position, add detail and specificity to information covered in your resume, and to express your individuality.

Cover letters are in the format of a formal business letter. A unique cover letter should be drafted for each position you apply for (no duplicates). Cover letters must be grammatically correct and error free.

Dear [Specific Person]/Dear Hiring Manager or Selection Committee:

INTRODUCTION

Introduce yourself (Name, Institution, Field of Study)

Position you are applying for and how you heard about it

Mention any connections you have with the company. If it's a person, ask them for permission to use their name first

Mention any prior communication you had with the company (e.g. Job Fair, networking event)

Summarize with 2-3 qualities on how you meet the qualifications for the position – transition for the next paragraph

BODY PARAGRAPH(S)

Focus on the telling the story of the 2-3 qualities you mention in the introduction

- How am I qualified to meet the requirements of the position?
- How can I demonstrate my qualifications?
- How will the employer benefit from these?

Use the “show, don't tell” method. If you are skilled at problem solving, don't simply state this in your Cover Letter (that's telling the employer). Rather, illustrate your point by highlighting a particular experience to your potential employer (that's showing the employer).

CLOSING

Reiterate why you are a good fit for the position/company

Invite yourself to an interview (“I look forward to visiting with you further about this position.”)

Thank the employer for their time

Include your contact information (phone number and e-mail address)

Respectfully/Sincerely

Signature – Signed by Hand

Signature – Printed

Enclosures: resume, references

Sample Cover Letter

Alejandra Doe

4300 College Blvd., Olympia, WA 98505

alejandradoe@mygreener.edu

360-123-4567

March 5, 2013

Christine Harrison
Human Resources Manager
Washington Department of Revenue
310 Maple Park Drive
Olympia, WA 98504

Dear Ms. Harrison:

I am applying for the Assistant Financial Planner Internship position with the Washington Department of Revenue, as posted on Community Opportunities Database (CODA) hosted by The Evergreen State College. I believe my educational standing combined with my professional background make me an ideal candidate for this position.

As a full-time student at The Evergreen State College, I am completing my senior year in the Bachelor of Arts (BA) Degree program, with an emphasis in financial management. Besides my finance-related coursework within the BA program, my practical business experience includes positions in sales management, personnel, procurements and purchase requisitions, and maintaining property inventory records. Through these professional positions, in both the private sector and with the State of Washington, I gained considerable knowledge of database management and accounting systems, and the ability to adapt quickly to changing work situations. I am extremely proficient in Microsoft Office programs, with advanced training in Excel. My excellent bilingual communication skills and my experience working with diverse populations are additional assets I can bring to the position.

I look forward to visiting with you further about this internship opportunity. I can be contacted by phone at 360-123-4567, or by email at alejandradoe@mygreener.edu.

Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully,

Alejandra Doe

Alejandra Doe

Enclosures: resume, references, letters of recommendation (2)

Sample Cover Letter

Ratherby Anglin

4300 University Way, Juneau, AK 99801

ratherby.anglin@mygreener.edu

907-987-6543

February 5, 2015

Murky Waters
Assistant Director, Environmental Programs
Alaska Department of Natural Resources
7890 Egan Drive, Third Floor
Juneau, AK, 99801

Dear Mr. Waters:

The Environmental Program Specialist II position with your department, as advertised on the Workplace Alaska website, strongly matches my career interests, my educational background, and the skills I have developed through my work experience.

While completing my Bachelor of Science degree with an emphasis in Environmental Science at The Evergreen State College, I worked concurrently as a research technician on grant-funded projects and as the College's recycling coordinator. In my research position I assisted professors on three distinct water analysis projects and gained valuable experience in sampling methods and research techniques. As the recycling coordinator I managed the College's recycling program, coordinated the pick-up schedules for multiple departments, and supervised a staff of three student workers.

During the past three summers I worked for Analytica Group, a water testing laboratory in Juneau, where I began as a seasonal water analyst and progressively worked my way into a full-time project management role. Through these positions I further expanded my knowledge and experience in analyzing techniques, developed a thorough understanding of city and state environmental regulations, wrote technical reports, and provided consulting services to clients regarding appropriate post-sampling actions and procedures. In addition to this field and laboratory work, I also spent one summer as a dispatcher for Juneau-based Temsco Helicopters where I received training on emergency protocol and assisted co-workers to provide a variety of customer support services.

This combination of education and practical work experience appears to be an ideal match for the Environmental Program Specialist II position. I look forward to an opportunity to visit with you further about it. I can be reached by phone at 907-987-6543, or by email at ratherby.anglin@mygreener.edu.

Respectfully,

Ratherby Anglin

Ratherby Anglin

Encl.: re sume

Sample Unsolicited Inquiry Letter

Samantha Sellers

1231 University Avenue, Fairbanks, AK 99700

907-123-4567

student@sample.net

February 19, 2015

Rick Reviewer
Manager, Recruiting and Training
A&D Seafood Company
2222 Oceanside Road
Anchorage, Alaska 99500

Dear Mr. Reviewer:

I am graduating in June 2015 with a Bachelor of Arts Degree, with an emphasis in Communication Studies from The Evergreen State College. I am interested in a sales position with your company because A&D Seafood Company has established a worldwide reputation in the seafood industry and it remains family-owned.

Growing up in a commercial fishing community taught me the different challenges a person faces when working in the industry. In addition, as a senior at Evergreen, I learned to deal with a variety of management and sales challenges through coursework in human resource management, speech communication, interpersonal communication, and negotiation. Along with my education, my experience as a sales coordinator for ABC Farms has confirmed my interest and success in a sales career.

From your web site, I understand A&D is dedicated to turning challenges into opportunities and change into growth. This growth has resulted in a reputation for high quality and strong customer relationships. This is the type of organization where I am confident my skills and knowledge would be best suited. Some of my skills and knowledge include:

- Proven sales experience
- Ability to work effectively as part of a team
- Experience in the agricultural industry
- Interpersonal communication skills
- Strong public speaking skills

Although my resume provides a summary of my background and experiences, I would like to meet with you in person to discuss any available opportunities with A&D Seafood Company. I can be reached at (907) 123-4567 or student@sample.net.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully,

Samantha Sellers

Samantha Sellers

Sample Thank You Letter

Leah Hilltop

1234 Fifth Avenue W, Apt. #111, Kent, WA 98032

253-333-3333

leahhilltop@hotmail.com

December 12, 2014

Mr. Skip Moss
Recruitment Coordinator
Manpower Temporary Services
P.O. Box 1700
Houston, TX 77001

Dear Mr. Moss,

I appreciated the opportunity to interview with you for the Administrative Assistant position. Before you make your final decision, I want you to know I am extremely interested in this position and in Manpower Temporary Services.

You made it clear that you are looking for someone who can prioritize, handle numerous tasks and work well under pressure. When you combine my accomplishments working in a variety of administrative support positions at The Evergreen State College, along with my customer service experience, you will find that I fit your profile perfectly.

Thank you for the interview and opportunity to gain some insight into your organization. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Leah Hilltop

Leah Hilltop

The Importance of Thank You Letters

A thank you letter follows an interview and expresses your appreciation for the interview and re-emphasizes your interest in the position. It can also be used for responding to a rejection or withdrawing yourself from consideration for a position. It restates your appreciation of the employer's time and for considering/interviewing you for the position.

Thank you letters have become standard practice and should be sent within 24-36 hours of the interview. They can be a brief handwritten message (legibly written, of course) on a simple conservative note card, or a more formal letter. Hand delivering them is preferred, but email format is also acceptable, especially if all of your correspondences with the employer except for the interview have been conducted in that format.

The value of sending a thank you letter is that it differentiates you from the crowd of other applicants who do not take the time to send a thank you note.

A thank you letter gives you an opportunity to:

- Emphasize your interest in the position and the company or organization
- Restate your major qualifications
- Add any afterthoughts or something that you may have forgotten to mention in the interview
- Mention a connection, common interest, or a story your interviewer shared with you

Even when you are not selected for the position a thank you letter illustrates your professionalism and can lead to positive results. It is not uncommon for individuals who make a good impression, but who may not have been the best candidate for one position, to be contacted by the same employer when another position – one that is a better fit for an individual's skills – becomes available. And many employers will admit that it was a thoughtful thank you note or letter that led them to contact a former applicant about a new position opening.

For more information and additional assistance, **call Academic & Career Advising at 360-867-6312 to schedule an appointment with one of our Career Advisors.**