



# Cover Letter Tips and Samples

## PURPOSE:

### Is a cover letter necessary?

- The purpose of a cover letter is to match your qualifications (skills, education, and experience) to a specific employer's needs, and to express your interest in the job and the organization.
- A well-written cover letter shows why you are a strong candidate for a particular position.
- Your cover letter is an opportunity to demonstrate your **communication skills** – the Number 1 ability sought by employers (according to the 2005 Job Outlook Survey conducted by the National Association of Colleges and Employers).
- A cover letter is a marketing tool to persuade a hiring professional to read your resume.
- **It's in your best interest to include a cover letter** whether you're sending your resume by e-mail, fax, or U.S. mail – or hand delivering it.

## CONTENT:

### It's very difficult to write a cover letter without a job description.

- **Do not** exceed one page – Usually three to four paragraphs. **Don't overuse the word "I"**. Starting every sentence with "I" gives the impression you are self-centered.
- **Address the letter to a specific individual.** Call to request the name and title of the person responsible for hiring college graduates in your career area. When mail is not addressed to you personally, don't you regard it as junk mail? Employers tend to have the same reaction to cover letters that begin with "To Whom It May Concern:" or "Dear Sir or Madam:" – NOT a good first impression! If you are unable to obtain the hiring person's name (including how to spell it) you may direct the letter to someone with a specific job title, such as Director of Editorial Services.
- **Sound positive and confident.** Your cover letter should motivate the reader to find out more about you, that is, to read your resume and maybe even interview you.
- **Write an attention-getting introduction.** Remember the three basic functions of an opening: to invite, inform, and entice.
- **Tailor your letters to the needs of the company and the requirements of the position.** Your letter highlights aspects of your background that suit a particular employer's needs – those needs are spelled out in the job description. While your resume may apply to many different employers, every cover letter should be targeted to a particular job and a specific organization. State the position for which you are applying for.
- **Focus on certain qualifications you wish to emphasize.** Do not merely repeat the contents of your resume. Fill in the blanks your resume leaves open. Tell why you are uniquely suited for the job. Select a few concrete, descriptive examples of your qualifications (achievements, experience, education, skills) that best fit the position you're applying for.
  - "Evidence of my leadership ability includes holding offices in 2 student organizations."
  - "I have excellent communication skills as demonstrated by writing a monthly newsletter for employees and by presenting sales proposals to customers."

## ESSENTIALS FOR SUCCESS:

- **Research the organization** before you write your cover letter. Use a search engine like google.com and search the Web for information about the employer. Demonstrate in your letter that you know something about the company's products or services and their customers (this information is almost always on the employer's web site). The more you research a company, the more you'll know what issues are important to them. Organizations hire people who can help them solve problems. Learn what their problems might be.

**NO TYPOS!** The image you want to give an employer includes a neatly typed, grammatically-correct cover letter and resume that are free from misspellings or other errors.

- **Do not simply list your abilities – give specific examples** that illustrate what you accomplished or how you accomplished it. For instance:  
Not effective: "I'm good at web design." or "I have web design experience."  
Effective: "My web design experience includes a class project in which I created an e-commerce site for a small business using JavaScript."  
Not effective: "I demonstrated supervisory skills in my last job."  
Effective: "My supervisory skills were demonstrated in my last job by training, mentoring, and evaluating 3 administrative support employees, resulting in a decrease in staff turnover."
- **For a polished, professional image:** Match your stationary and resume stock size, weight and shade. Traditionally, the 8 ½" X 11" paper selected for the cover letters and resumes is either white, off white, ivory or gray and at least 24 pound bond weight. For documents that you originally e-mailed or faxed to an employer, you can follow up by also sending your high-quality copies – preferably unfolded in a large envelope – by U.S. mail. **Sign your cover letter.**

## TO HELP YOU GET STARTED:

Below are some opening lines to give you some direction. Refer also to the sample letters attached.

### **First paragraph**

- I am applying for...
- My classmate, Matthew Hamilton, suggested I contact you regarding...
- Your web site indicated your need for...
- Per your advertisement in the Arizona Republic for...

### **Second (and Third - optional) paragraph**

- As noted on my resume I ....
- According to the requirements stated in your job description...
- Per your job description, I can offer you the following...
- My experience relevant to this position includes...
- I am a strong candidate for this job because...

### **Closing paragraph**

- I'm excited about putting my skills to work for ...
- I am confident I can meet your needs for...
- To discuss how I can contribute to ...



# Model Cover Letter

Date

*Your Street Address*  
*City, State Zip Code*

(Space down four spaces)

Ms./Mr. Recruiter's Full Name  
Recruiter's Title  
Department Name  
Company Name  
Street Address  
City, State Zip Code

Dear Ms./Mr. Last Name Only:

The opening paragraph should state why you are writing and why you are interested in the organization. If you are writing a letter of application, you should name the specific position for which you are applying. Also, tell the employer how you became aware of the vacancy. If a career counselor, a former employer or someone else referred you to the employer, this is the best place to mention that person's name and to point out that he or she suggested you write. A letter of inquiry should provide evidence of your career-mindedness; it helps to refer to specific job functions, if not titles, when trying to determine if a vacancy exists.

The middle paragraph is where you draw attention to your resume and highlight specific skills relevant to the potential employer. This should be your most developed paragraph. Present your motives for seeking employment with this organization and cite achievements and qualifications related to the position desired (see job description). If you have qualifications that are not noted on your resume, this is your opportunity to discuss them.

The closing paragraph states what you will do next (such as calling to arrange an appointment at the employer's convenience) or what you would like the recipient of the letter to do next. An assertive statement explaining what you plan to do and what you hope the employer will do is harder to ignore than a vague request for consideration. Be assertive!

Sincerely,

*Your signature here*

Your Name Typed

Enclosure(s): (this indicates that your resume and/or additional materials are enclosed.)

# Sample Cover Letter

March 25, 2004

3877 University Drive  
Tempe, Arizona 85203

Ms. Stephanie P. Tatoe  
Manager of College Relations  
Frito-Lay  
P.O. Box 741  
Dallas, Texas 73235

Dear Ms. Tatoe:

While researching information at the Career Services Center at Arizona State University, I read a letter you recently sent describing the employment opportunities at Frito-Lay. I am writing to express my interest in the available Sales Representative position and hope upon graduating from Arizona State University this May, I can begin a career in sales and marketing with your organization.

You will note from the enclosed resume that many of my extracurricular and work experiences involved the organization and promotion of events. I have had direct sales experience soliciting potential customers for the We Three Caterers and have been successful in managing employees in various capacities. Perhaps the most challenging and rewarding experience I have had to date was working with Congressman Gradison and the Organizing committee of the United Way Literary Festival. I am confident that I have the sales and managerial skills required to be a contributing member of the Frito-Lay organization.

I am impressed by the reputation of your company and feel confident that my experience would enable me to perform the job well. I would appreciate an opportunity to meet with you and discuss my qualifications and to learn more about this job opportunity and your organization. I will call you the week of April 6<sup>th</sup> to see if a meeting can be arranged. In the meantime, I may be reached at (480) 616-9876 or ineedajob@aol.com.

Thank you for your consideration. I look forward to meeting with you.

Sincerely,

Sparky S. Devil

Enclosure: Resume