



### **Career Development Center's Guide to Writing a Cover Letter**

The cover letter formally introduces you and your resume to the employer. It is often the first writing sample you will submit to an employer and, as such, you will want it to reflect your best abilities. Cover letters should reflect sound writing practices and promote your candidacy. You must communicate your value to a prospective organization in an understandable, brief, and positive way. The cover letter should be one page in length and should include three to four paragraphs. It is important to include a cover letter with every resume you send. Remember to address the letter to a specific person, along with his or her title, and to sign your name at the bottom. Before you send your cover letter, be sure to proofread, checking for any grammatical or spelling errors. Here are some additional tips to keep in mind:

- Design your letters to be work-centered and employer-centered, not self-centered.
- Your letters are marketing tools that should address the need of employers and should inspire a desire to learn more about you.
- Never delegate responsibility for your job or internship search to anyone else. Do all the writing yourself, and take responsibility for following up with employers.
- Always address your letters to a specific individual with his or her correct title and business address.
- If you are mailing your cover letter, be sure to use high quality stationery and envelopes.
- Keep the letter to one page. Eliminate extraneous words and avoid rehashing material from your resume.
- Tailor your letter for each employer. Generic, mass-produced letters are unprofessional.
- Show appreciation to the employer for considering your application and for granting you an interview.
- Always keep your reader in mind. Make the letter easy to read and attractive.
- Avoid redundancy in your sentence structure. For example, don't start each sentence with "I". Vary your language throughout the letter to demonstrate strong professional writing skills.
- Be honest. Always be able to support your claims with evidence and specific examples from your experiences.

#### **Opening Paragraph**

Address your letter to a contact person as opposed to using salutations such as, "To whom it may concern" or "Dear Sir or Madam" whenever possible. If you were referred to the employer by someone, the first sentence is the best place for you to mention this. The opening paragraph should state why you are writing and why you are interested in working for the organization. If you are writing a letter of application, state the name of the position for which you are applying and how you became aware of the opening.

*Example: Recently I spoke with Jill Jones regarding my career interests in education and community service. She informed me of your search for a Program Director for A Better Chance and suggested I contact you. I am very enthusiastic about the description of the Program Director and have enclosed my resume for your consideration.*

When writing a letter of inquiry, state how you became aware of the organization and request an opportunity to meet and discuss ways in which you can contribute to the organization's efforts.

*Example: The September 15, 2012 issue of The Philadelphia Inquirer included an article about A Better Chance's innovative residential teen tutoring program. I would welcome the opportunity to meet with you and learn more about your program and discuss opportunities that may be available.*

### **Middle Section**

Use this section to highlight specific skills and/or experiences that are relevant to the potential employer's needs. Present your motives for seeking employment with the organization and cite achievements and qualifications related to the position. If you have qualifications that are not represented on your resume, this is your opportunity to present them. Take advantage of the space of a full page letter to present your related experience.

*Example: My interest in the Program Director position stems from its mission to create and maintain programs benefiting underprivileged teenagers with a desire to complete high school and pursue a college degree. While attending Saint Joseph's University, I volunteered at the YWCA and organized an after-school tutoring program for 90 young women between the ages of 13 and 17. This experience strengthened my leadership, organizational, and interpersonal skills. It also solidified my interest in pursuing opportunities like the one offered by A Better Chance.*

### **Final Paragraph**

In this section state what you will do next or what you would like the recipient of the letter to do next. An assertive statement explaining what you are planning to do or what you hope the employer will do is better than a vague request for consideration. Also mention any enclosures that accompany your letter (i.e. resume, writing sample, letters of reference, a list of references).

*Example: I would welcome an opportunity to discuss the Program Director position and my interest in contributing to A Better Chance's efforts. I will call you the week of October 11th to discuss the possibility of scheduling a convenient time for us to meet. If you would like to call me before this, I can be reached at 123-456-7890.*

### **SJU Writing Center**

Students and alumni are also welcome to visit the Writing Center for assistance with cover letters. Please visit their website at <http://www.sju.edu/int/academics/cas/english/writingcenter/index.html> for more information.

## Sample Cover Letter 1:

1234 Hawk Lane  
Apartment A  
Philadelphia PA 19131

April 17, 2012

Mr. Frank Smith  
Director of Marketing Communications  
Philly Publishing, Inc.  
200 Main Street  
Philadelphia, PA 19131

Dear Mr. Smith:

I am writing to express interest in the Marketing Assistant position which was advertised with the Saint Joseph's University Career Development Center. I will graduate in May with a Bachelor of Arts in English. The marketing position at Philly Publishing is particularly appealing to me because I am keenly interested in the electronic publishing industry.

My qualifications are based on a combination of coursework and experience. As an English major with an American Studies minor, I have pursued an interdisciplinary course of studies. I have particularly enjoyed and excelled in the courses that were writing intensive, such as American Literature, Writing for the Media, and American Film and Culture. Many of my courses have required that I research and write 5-10 page papers each semester. I supplemented my coursework with an internship this past fall at Amazing Advertising Agency in Philadelphia, where I gained a broad based exposure to marketing. I am eager to apply this experience in your marketing department.

I recently read an article in *Electronic Media* that described the phenomenal growth that Philly Publishing has experienced during the past year. I would appreciate the opportunity to meet with you to learn more about the company and the Marketing Assistant position. I will contact you next week to inquire about the status of your search. If you would like to contact me, I can be reached at (610) 555-1234 or by email at [sara.student@sju.edu](mailto:sara.student@sju.edu). Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

*Sarah Student*

Sarah Student

**Sample Cover Letter 2:**

SJU Street, Apt. 1  
Philadelphia, PA 19131

January 12, 2013

Patricia Smiles  
Director of Human Resources  
Science Organization  
1140 Main Street  
Philadelphia, PA 19999

Dear Ms. Smiles:

I wish to apply for the Research Internship position posted on Saint Joseph's University's Career Development Center's website. I am currently a junior majoring in Biology and am seeking career experience for the Spring semester. I desire to explore possible opportunities within the field of scientific research.

The Research Internship would allow me to utilize the writing and analytical skills I have gained as a Biology major, as well as my past work experience that demanded much organization, discipline, and responsibility. My active leadership and service roles have also helped me develop strong interpersonal and communication skills, which I feel would make me an asset to your organization.

I would greatly appreciate the opportunity to discuss with you how I might best meet your needs. I will contact you the week of January 19<sup>th</sup> to discuss my qualifications. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to call me at (610) 660-0000 or to email me at [iwanna.job@sju.edu](mailto:iwana.job@sju.edu). Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

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Iwana Job

Enclosure: Resume

**Sample Cover Letter 3:**

1851 Founded Street  
Philadelphia, PA 19131

January 14, 2013

Joann Hunter  
Employment Specialist  
Great Corporation  
PO Box 007  
Philadelphia, PA 19101

Dear Ms. Hunter:

Through information provided by the Career Development Center at Saint Joseph's University, it has come to my attention that your corporation offers a communications internship program for college students. As a qualified junior looking for full-time employment during the summer months, I am very interested in discussing the possibility of working for your establishment.

Over the past several years, I have worked in retail and as a waiter in a local restaurant. These positions have allowed me to develop communication and customer service skills. In addition, I have developed a strong work ethic that is evidenced by maintaining a part-time job while in college. My goal in obtaining an internship with your organization is to gain practical experience to complement my academic coursework as well as to benefit your organization in any way possible.

Enclosed, please find a copy of my resume. I plan to contact you on January 21 to discuss my resume and qualifications. If you would like to reach me prior to that date, however, you may contact me at (610) 660-3100 or joseph.hawk@sju.edu.

Thank you for your consideration. I look forward to speaking to you.

Sincerely,

Joseph Hawk

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