

Correspondence

Cover Letters

What Do You Want People to Know?

Remember those essays you wrote for your college application? What did you want the recruitment office to know most about you? Your grade point average? Your extracurricular activities? Your volunteer work?

While a resume is a broad statement of your education and experience, your cover letter is an original statement like your college essay, designed to help get you to the interview. When two candidates for a position are equally qualified, a cover letter written with extra effort puts you in the driver's seat.

A well-written cover letter demonstrates to a potential employer that you have:

- Researched the company's or organization's mission, past performance and goals
- Reviewed the job description thoroughly and given thought to how your skills and experience can meet the employer's needs

Your cover letter is a direct reflection of you. A well-written and focused cover letter leaves an employer with the impression that you are thorough, organized and results oriented. Employers will use your cover letter to make observations about your written communication skills, organizational skills, technical knowledge, personality and motivation.

Cover Letters Do's and Don'ts

DO

- Be brief, selective, clear, concise, and specific
- Keep your cover letter to 1 page
- Open your letter with a strong sentence that describes your purpose for writing
- List your competencies, skills and accomplishments from the employer's perspective
- Use action words and phrases
- Spell check and proofread your letter

DON'T

- Don't repeat your resume
- Use abbreviations
- End on a passive note
- Forget to sign the letter and include your resume

Following Up by Phone or Email

Sometimes employers do not respond to applications. You should always follow up regarding an application (unless told not to). Your first attempt to make a call or email should be within seven to ten days after submitting your resume and cover letter. If you are unable to reach the person through your first attempt, try contacting them once more through the other method.

Insert your address or use your resume heading for consistency

Your Street Address
City, State Zip Code

Date of Letter

Individual's Name
Title
Company
Street Address
City, State Zip Code

Salutation: Dear Mr., Ms., Dr. followed by their last name and a colon

First Paragraph:

- Indicate why you are writing, the specific position, or type of work you are applying for and how you learned of the opening (CDC, newspaper, website, referral).
- Your next sentence is a claim sentence that outlines why you are qualified for the job and a good fit for the position. Example: "I believe I would be a good fit for this position because of my education in _____ and work experience in _____"

Second/Third Paragraph(s):

- Explain why you are interested in the position and the organization.
- Highlight your experience that relates directly to the position posted as well as examples of skills that would be useful in the position but do not reiterate your entire resume. For example, don't just say you can work under pressure. Tell prospective employers that you have served up to forty customers an hour at your restaurant job. Provide numbers, specifics, details, and context in your support for your claims.
- If you are a recent graduate or will be graduating soon, explain how your academic background makes you a qualified candidate for the position. Tell prospective employers what skills you've developed at school and in the workplace and show them how you can use them.

Bullet Point Paragraph (optional and less traditional approach):

- This style may draw the reader's attention to your skills more quickly.
- Use this paragraph in or after your second paragraph.
- Use a complete sentence to introduce the bulleted list or use complete sentences in the bullets.
- Here are some example sentence starters for your bullet-point section:
 - The skills I have developed throughout my past internships are:
 - Some key strengths I can bring to this position are:
 - Highlights of my qualifications include:

Last Paragraph/Closing:

- Refer the reader to your enclosed resume as a summary of your qualifications if you have not already done so. Convey your desire for a personal interview. Indicate that you are flexible as to the scheduling of an interview or that you will follow-up with a phone call on a specific date to arrange for an interview. If the description asks for no phone calls/contact, do not state you will follow up.
- Indicate your interest in the position once again.
- Thank the reader for his/her time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Sign and Type Your Name

Cover Letter Sample One

4554 West 95th Avenue
Woodbury, Minnesota 55656

November 21, 201X

Ms. Alexis Ryan
Human Resources Specialist
American Family Insurance
1790 3rd Avenue North
Minneapolis, Minnesota 55478

Dear Ms. Ryan:

This letter of application is in regard to the entry-level Analyst position with American Family Insurance. In May, I will receive my Bachelor of Arts degree in Economics from Hamline University. I am looking forward to applying my degree and knowledge as an analyst.

As my resume indicates, I recently completed an internship at a branch office of American Family Insurance that required independent thinking and problem solving techniques. This position developed my skills in analyzing, identifying and presenting solutions to problems that were associated with the financial statements. Additionally, as part of my internship experience, I participated in meetings with a company accountant to resolve overspending and reduce a division's deficit. I enjoyed having the opportunity to apply the skills and theories I have learned in my academic study.

I also volunteer with Hamline's student business organization as the secretary. Members have appreciated my attention to detail and thoroughness of the notes I take. Through my work and volunteer experience, I have had the opportunity to strengthen my accounting, leadership and organizational skills. I believe that American Family Insurance would benefit from my previous experience and strong work ethic.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I plan to contact you within the next two weeks to discuss my qualifications. At your convenience, I would welcome the opportunity to interview with you. I can be reached at 555-735-1234.

Sincerely,

(Signature)

Anne Williams

Cover Letter Sample Two

Claudia Seaver

4225 Spring Street, St. Paul, MN 55223
Cseaver01@hamline.edu | 651-555-5555

July 1, 201X

Ms. Louise Kratt
Manager of Public Relations
Midwest Publications
Suite 42
755 Jefferson Street
Minneapolis, MN 65332

Dear Ms. Kratt:

Please accept this letter of application for the position of Assistant Director of Communications. I possess the journalistic and administrative leadership experience required to be an effective member of your team.

As my enclosed resume indicates, I have worked for the Hamline school newspaper for more than three years in different capacities. As a writer/editor, I have written more than thirty articles on various topics ranging from sports and entertainment to editorial commentary. I was instrumental in the purchase and implementation of the newspaper's new software. As a manager and administrator, I was able to successfully direct a 15 person writing staff by assigning story ideas, balancing deadlines, and giving the paper its overall editorial direction. Additionally, my responsibilities included ad marketing.

Previous employers have praised my willingness to take on any task required to get the project done. "Cheerful" and "team-player" are other words that are frequently used to describe me. Through independent research, I have learned that Midwest Publications is on the leading edge of developing print technology. I believe that my experience with this area, personal characteristics, and desire to succeed make me a strong candidate for the position.

I look forward to meeting with you to discuss how my qualifications and experience could be well used by Midwest Publications. Thank you for your time and consideration. I will contact you by July 15th. If you have any questions before then, I may be reached at 651-555-5555 or Cseaver01@hamline.edu.

Sincerely,

(Signature)

Claudia Seaver

Cover Letter Sample Three

Dustin Lourve

1536 Hamline Avenue • St. Paul, MN 55104 • 651-523-1111 • DLourve@gmail.com

March 5, 201X

Ms. Kristin Duggan
Director of Human Resources
Eau Claire High School
2225 ABC Street
Eau Claire, WI 54701

Dear Ms. Duggan:

I am very interested in joining the teaching team at Eau Claire High school as the new Biology teacher. I initially found this position posted through Hamline's CareerLink. A former colleague of mine, Emily Boldt, is currently a Spanish teacher at Eau Claire High School and strongly encouraged me to apply.

During my student teaching experience, I learned more about the Eau Claire school district and have found that my values align very well to yours. Recognizing that each student is an individual, that all students are creative, and all students deserve to succeed is what contributes to your success and makes me excited to be considered as your next Biology teacher.

I believe that each student should be treated as an individual and that creative strategies with teaching can allow greater learning and development. For example, during my student teaching experience I noticed that my school had a high discipline referral rate. I knew more could be done for these students. I collaborated with another teacher and implemented an after-school intervention program that decreased post-school discipline referrals by 35%. My collaborating teacher was highly impressed by this new intervention and the school has decided to continue this program next year as well. In addition to my creative approach some of my other skills include:

- Modifying instruction techniques to reach varying learner levels
- Effective relationship building with diverse populations
- Monitoring student learning through the use of formative assessment
- Designing lesson plans using inquiry-based learning to help explore scientific concepts

I believe I would be a great addition to Eau Claire High school and am excited to have the opportunity to discuss my qualifications with you further. I have attached my resume for your review. I will contact you within two weeks to inquire about the status of my application. You may also contact me at 555-555-5555 or at DLourve@gmail.com. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

(Signature)

Dustin Lourve

Job Posting Sample and Sample Letter Responding to Job Posting

4554 West 95th Avenue
Woodbury, MN 55656

November 17, 201X

Susan McNeil
Manager of Human Resources
General Mills, Inc.
101 General Mills Blvd.
Golden Valley, MN 55401

Dear Ms. McNeil:

I was excited when I saw your advertisement for a Sales Representative in the Minneapolis Star Tribune. I have a strong interest in working within the packaged foods industry, specifically a company like General Mills. The accompanying resume summarizes my experience relevant to the qualifications you outlined.

I will complete my Bachelor of Arts degree at Hamline University in May. I am majoring in marketing with a minor in speech communications. Throughout college, I worked in several positions in which I demonstrated excellence in customer service through assessing and meeting customer needs. I have learned to handle questions, develop creative solutions to customer problems, and gained valuable retail experience. I believe my combination of education, skills and work experience will allow me to make a significant contribution to General Mills.

I am enthusiastic about this sales position and look forward to discussing my qualifications with you. Please feel free to contact me at 651-555-5555 if you have questions or need additional information. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

(Signature)

Elizabeth Conners

Sales Representative

General Mills Sales Division is seeking an outgoing, energetic person to fill a Sales Representative position in the Minneapolis/St. Paul area.

As a Sales Representative for General Mills, you will be responsible for the selling and merchandising of General Mills products to retail customers in an assigned area. Frequency and productivity levels will be assigned by management and monitored for results.

We require a Bachelor's degree. You must have excellent communication, interpersonal and leadership skills as well as a strong sales aptitude. We offer a competitive compensation and benefits package, career growth and a rewarding work environment.

For prompt consideration, please send your resume to:

Susan McNeil
Manager of Human Resources
General Mills, Inc.
101 General Mills Blvd
Golden Valley, MN 55401

Equal Opportunity Employer
No Phone Calls Please

Thank You Notes

Saying thank you is arguably the most important part of the interview process. You may have scored high on your qualifications and your interview demeanor, so don't stumble by forgetting to write a thank you note. A note should be sent within 24-48 hours after your interview. (Ask the interviewers for their business cards before you leave the interview so you will have the correct contact information and name spellings.) In addition, a thank you note should be written to everyone who helps you in any way during your job search. Keep in mind your note should be well-written, error-free and articulate.

What to write:

- Thank the interviewer for his or her time, and for considering you for the position.
- If you are still interested, make sure you state it!
- Highlight or re-iterate some of your strengths and skills that were brought up during the interview.
- If you feel like you did not answer a question well during the interview, you may address the question in your thank you note in the way you were hoping to answer it initially.
- If you were interviewed by multiple people, it's best to send a thank-you to each one. Change each message somewhat.

Formal thank you letters should be used for organizations with a formal work environment. This is a standard business letter style that should be under 1 page in length. This letter should be printed on high-quality resume paper and mailed to the recipient.

Hand-written note cards can be used for less-formal environments or for those that may appreciate a more personal touch. These are shorter in length and should be written in blue or black ink. The note card should be a small, professional-looking style. Clear handwriting is essential for these cards, if you cannot handwrite well, use a different format.

Email thank you notes should be used if you know the interviewers will be making a hiring decision very quickly. An email is also a good idea if you met with a recruiter or someone you know is not in their office frequently. An email should still be formally addressed and contain 2-3 short paragraphs.

Thank You Email Sample

Dear Ms. Bast,

Thank you very much for taking the time from your busy schedule to meet with me to discuss careers in the publishing industry. Your advice and insight will be most helpful to me as I begin to explore career options this year.

As you suggested, I will contact Mr. Derek Sempston next week regarding the current opening with his organization. I also appreciate your offer to assist me in the future and will stay in touch with you.

Again, thank you for your assistance.

Sincerely,

Mark Taylor

[Email signature block should appear here]

Formal Thank-You Letter Sample

1300 1st Avenue South
Minneapolis, Minnesota 55419

June 11, 201X

Mr. Robert Cooper
Assistant Director of Management
Maxwell Consulting
258 East Front Street
Bloomington, IL 61701

Dear Mr. Cooper:

Thank you for inviting me to interview with Maxwell Consulting to discuss the available analyst position. The position we discussed sounds challenging and inspiring. I believe my background and experience provide a good match for the requirements of the position.

As a result of my research and interview, I have found Maxwell Consulting to be a dynamic and exhilarating place to work. Because of my related experience, this environment and position seem like a great fit to me. I have developed skills regarding thinking critically, dealing with complexities, and communicating with a wide variety of individuals. As I mentioned in my interview, these skills combined with my desire to demonstrate my abilities make me a qualified candidate for this analyst position.

It was a pleasure talking with you and I look forward to hearing from you soon. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

(Signature)

Beatriz Lopez

Hand-Written Thank You Note Card Sample

[write or print clearly]
Dear Mrs. Campbell,

Thank you for taking the time to interview me for the youth development internship with the Boys and Girls club. I loved hearing more about how this position would help to motivate at-risk youth to reach their full potential. I was also excited to hear that if hired, I could implement new programming. I believe my past volunteer experience as a mentor and my social justice major would contribute to my success in this position.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Susan White