

PREPARING COVER LETTERS AND OTHER JOB SEARCH CORRESPONDENCE

You should **always** include a cover letter when sending or faxing (or even emailing) your resume to an individual or an organization. The cover letter allows you to direct the reader's attention to specific strengths or accomplishments that are especially relevant to the organization or the position you are seeking. **It is just as important as your resume** and serves the same basic purpose—get you an interview.

As you proceed with your job search, it will also be necessary for you to prepare other types of correspondence, including thank you letters, acceptance and rejection letters, etc. The same careful attention should be given to these, as they are also important in conveying the positive and professional image necessary to a successful job search.

This handout includes general guidelines, a basic outline and description of the key elements of the cover letter, and some sample cover letters to get you started. Also included are some suggestions and samples to help you prepare effective thank you letters and other job search correspondence.

Remember, the sample letters are intended to serve only as examples. Use them as models, but be sure to tailor your correspondence specifically to the individual, organization and/or position you are seeking. For additional guidance or assistance, stop in or call Career Coaching Center.



PREPARING EFFECTIVE COVER LETTERS

The cover letter is every bit as important as your resume. In fact, many employers will not even look at your resume if the cover letter is poorly written, disorganized or difficult to read and understand. And of course, if your resume isn't even read, the chance of getting an interview is virtually zero. Therefore, it is important to give the same careful consideration and attention to the preparation of cover letters as you gave to your resume.

There are basically two types of cover letters you might use in your job search:

- *Letter of Application or Response to an Advertisement:* used when you are responding to a specific advertised opening; the strategy here is to show how your skills and qualifications fit the requirements of the position.
- *Letter of Inquiry:* used when you are contacting an individual or organization to ask about possible openings; the strategy is the same except that you focus on broader occupational or organizational requirements to demonstrate how your qualifications match the work environment or can be utilized to meet organizational needs.

Whichever type of cover letter you are sending, it says something very important about you as a professional and as a prospective employee. It should be a clear demonstration of your written communication skills and knowledge of accepted business practices, as well as your ability to convince and persuade the reader of your value to the organization. This means that you must prepare a new letter each time--after doing some research to determine the particular needs and requirements of the organization and position you are seeking. You must also determine which of your specific skills or accomplishments best demonstrate how you can meet those needs. Finally, you must compose a letter that communicates your value in an understandable, concise, professional and business-like way. The guidelines and sample letters that follow will help you achieve these goals.



General Guidelines and Suggestions For Preparing Cover Letters

1. **Show what you can do for the reader, not what you want the reader to do for you;** keep the focus on your qualifications as they relate to the position you are seeking.
2. **Write clearly and simply;** avoid jargon and overly complex or lengthy sentences; say what you have to say directly and succinctly.
3. **Business letters are formal rather than informal communications;** see sample letters for examples of acceptable business style and format.
4. **Keep it brief;** a one-page letter of 3 - 4 paragraphs is sufficient; your cover letter should never be more than one page long.
5. **Mention one or two specific accomplishments or strengths** that demonstrate your expertise or proficiency and make the reader want to know more, then refer the reader to your resume for more information.
6. **Whenever possible, address your letter to a specific person;** if you don't have a name but do know the company, call their human resources department or main switchboard and ask for the name of the human resources manager or the person in charge of the area where the position is most likely located.
7. **Always keep the reader in mind;** make your letters easy to read and keep to the point; demonstrate that you understand and can use sound business writing principles in your communications.
8. **Produce high quality, error-free copy;** follow the guidelines used in preparing your resume and be sure to proofread carefully; use the same font and pitch used in your resume, and make your letter look as much like your resume as possible.
9. **Use high quality stationary and envelopes;** the best strategy is to use the same paper as your resume and purchase matching envelopes.
10. **Be honest;** always be able to back up what you say with evidence and specific examples from your experience.
11. **Close by stating what action you will be taking as a follow-up to your letter,** wherever possible; this takes the burden off the reader and also gives you more control over the process.
12. **Be positive in tone, choice of words and expectations;** convey your self-confidence, enthusiasm and professionalism.
13. **Be sure to sign your letter** using your full name as typed.



PREPARING OTHER CORRESPONDENCE DURING YOUR JOB SEARCH

There are several other types of letters you may use during the course of your job search. Each has its particular purpose and should be prepared with the same care as your cover letters and resume. The most commonly used letters are described below and a sample of each is included in this handout. Be sure to follow the guidelines and tips used in preparing your resume and cover letters, and always remember to sign all letters. You should also keep copies of all correspondence for your own records.

- *Thank You Letter:* used following a meeting or interview to express your appreciation and to strengthen your position as a highly qualified candidate; also send thank you letters to those individuals you may have interviewed as part of your job search research (information interviews); it's also a nice, professional touch to send letters of appreciation to people who served as references for you.

The thank you letter is probably one of the most important but least used tools in the job search process. Your use of this tool can set you apart and above other candidates, so be sure you send a thank you letter within 1-2 days after every interview. Make it brief, warm and more personal than your cover letter, but maintain a professional, business-like style. In addition to expressing your appreciation for the interview and reaffirming your interest in the position, this is your opportunity to reemphasize your strengths or mention some aspect of your background or experience that wasn't covered during the interview.

- *Withdrawal Letter:* used to inform the employer of your decision to withdraw your application from consideration during the selection process; you should express your appreciation for the employer's time and courtesy and give a brief explanation for your decision--you might say that you accepted a position with another organization, but **never** say that you accepted a better job.



- *Rejection Letter*: used to inform the employer that you are declining an employment offer; whatever the reason for your decision, word your letter carefully so that it conveys your sincere appreciation and careful consideration of the offer; provide a brief explanation for your decision, but again, **never** say that you accepted a better job.
- *Acceptance Letter*: used to convey your decision to accept a job offer **and** to confirm the terms of your employment; as a general rule, you will already have accepted the offer via personal meeting or telephone call, but don't neglect to confirm your acceptance in writing; this is a good way to ensure that there are no misunderstandings when you actually begin your employment.



GENERAL OUTLINE AND BASIC ELEMENTS OF THE COVER LETTER

Your Name
Your Address
Your Phone Number
Your Email Address

Date of Letter

Reader's Name
Reader's Title
Name of Company
Company Address
City, State Zipcode

Salutation: Use Title and Last Name if available (e.g., Dear Dr. Smith: or Dear Ms. Jones:); don't use a first name unless you know the individual well and are sure this is acceptable; if you do not have a name, use the title (e.g., Dear Employment Manager:); never use "Dear Sir or Madam:" or "To Whom It May Concern."

Opening Paragraph: State why you are writing, name the position or type of work for which you are applying, and mention how you heard of the opening or organization.

Middle Paragraph(s) Here you want to describe your major strengths **as they relate to the position you are seeking**. If possible, mention one or two recent accomplishments that illustrate your proficiency and effectiveness. The idea is to create interest and show how your skills and qualifications can be of value to the organization.--to make the reader want to know more. Don't reiterate everything that's in your resume, but refer the reader to your enclosed resume for more detail on your qualifications and experience.

Closing Paragraph: Restate your strong interest in the position or organization and your desire for a face-to-face meeting. Pave the way for the interview by indicating the action or steps you will take to initiate a meeting. If this is not appropriate, simply state that you look forward to hearing from the reader soon. Finally, express your appreciation for the reader's time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Your Signature

Your Full Name: This should be the same as your heading, and also match your resume.

Enclosure: In the event that your letter and resume are separated, this simply indicates to the reader that there is additional material included with your letter.

SAMPLE COVER LETTER

(LETTER OF INQUIRY)

IM A. SAMPLE
1234 North 55 Street
Bellevue, Nebraska 68005
(402) 292-2345
imasample@xxx.com

(Current Date)

Mary Peterson, Manager
Accounting Department
XYZ Company
10 Dear Park Drive
Omaha, Nebraska 68102

Dear Ms. Peterson:

I am writing to introduce myself to you at the suggestion of Professor John Jones of Bellevue University. He has indicated that you are very interested in talking to senior Accounting students regarding possible career opportunities.

As you can see in the enclosed resume, I have a very strong academic background in Accounting combined with over five years work experience in accounting and bookkeeping. My recent internship at Mutual of Omaha allowed me to further develop and strengthen my technical and analytical/problem solving skills through the successful completion of a major project involving the conversion of a manual to a computerized accounting system. As Professor Jones indicated that this type of conversion is a major concern for your organization over the next year, I believe that I could make a significant and valuable contribution on that project, as well as other challenges that I'm sure you are facing.

I would appreciate the opportunity to discuss how my education and experience are consistent with your needs and will be contacting you within the next few days to talk about the possibility of arranging an interview. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Im A. Sample

Im A. Sample

Enclosure

SAMPLE COVER LETTER

(LETTER OF APPLICATION)

IM A SAMPLE II
4321 South 55 Street
Bellevue, Nebraska 68005
(402) 291-5432
Imsample2@xxx.net

(Current Date)

Mr. John Smith, Director
Marketing and Public Relations
National NonProfit Association
1234 Farnam Street
Omaha, Nebraska 68112

Dear Mr. Smith:

I am applying for the Marketing/Public Relations Intern position advertised through Career Services at Bellevue University. As shown in the enclosed resume, I have a strong academic background in Business Administration and expect to graduate in May, 19xx.

My current work as Advertising Coordinator for our monthly student newspaper has given me firsthand experience in the challenges associated with the development and implementation of a successful marketing/advertising campaign. In addition, I have excellent creative writing and communication skills, as demonstrated by my successful experience in the publication of a weekly in-house newsletter while at Guarantee Mutual.

This background, combined with over five years of general business experience, has given me a unique perspective that would be particularly valuable in meeting the responsibilities of this position, as described in your advertisement. I would welcome the opportunity to meet with you to discuss my qualifications in more detail and look forward to hearing from you soon.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Im A. Sample II

Im A. Sample II

Enclosure

SAMPLE COVER LETTER

(RESPONSE TO ADVERTISEMENT)

IM A. SAMPLE III
3456 Westview Road
Bellevue, Nebraska 68005
(402) 291-5678
Imasample3@xxx.com

(Current Date)

Manager, Human Resources
Telemarketing Corporation
12123 West Center Road
Omaha, Nebraska 68134

Dear Human Resources Manager:

I am applying for the position of Customer Service Manager, as advertised on www.careerlink.com. With over five years experience in customer service and a strong educational background in human resources management, I am confident I have the skills and qualifications you are seeking.

As an example of my most recent accomplishments, I designed and implemented an incentive program that significantly increased productivity among customer service employees. This, in turn, significantly raised the level of customer satisfaction with the service provided. Because employee productivity and customer satisfaction are key components of a successful customer service operation, I believe that my expertise in these areas would be of particular value in meeting the challenges of this position.

The enclosed resume summarizes the full range of my skills and qualifications. I would appreciate the opportunity for a personal interview to discuss this position and my qualifications in more detail and look forward to hearing from you at your earliest convenience.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Im A. Sample III

Im A. Sample III

Enclosure

SAMPLE COVER LETTER

(TAILORED RESPONSE TO ADVERTISEMENT)

IM A SAMPLE IV
9876 Paddock Drive
Bellevue, Nebraska 68005
(402) 543-1234
Imasample4@xxx.com

(Current Date)

Richard Thomas, Employment Specialist
Data Services Company
555 South 16th Street
Omaha, Nebraska 68102

Dear Mr. Thomas:

According to the advertisement on file in Bellevue University's Career Services Office, you are currently seeking candidates for the position of Management Trainee. I am very interested in this position and believe I possess the qualifications you are seeking:

Your Requirements

1. Degree in Business or related field
2. Proven sales record
3. Demonstrated leadership ability
4. Self motivated and able to handle multiple responsibilities

My Qualifications

1. B.S. in Business Administration
2. Recognized as "Sales Associate of the Year" for three consecutive years
3. Captain, University Baseball Team, President, Student Government
4. Successfully balanced work, classroom and athletic responsibilities, graduating with a GPA of 3.78

The full range of my skills and qualifications is summarized in the enclosed resume. These, along with my enthusiasm and resourcefulness, would enable me to quickly become a valuable member of your management team at Data Services Company.

Again, I am very interested in this position and look forward to a personal interview at your earliest convenience. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Im A. Sample IV

Im A. Sample IV

SAMPLE CORRESPONDENCE
(THANK YOU LETTER AFTER INTERVIEW)

IM A. SAMPLE V
987 Northridge Drive
Omaha, Nebraska 68123
(402) 543-1234
Imasample5@xxx.com

(Current Date)

Ms. Judy Smith, Director
Market and Sales Research Division
ABC Corporation
4321 Industrial Road
Omaha, Nebraska 68201

Dear Ms. Smith:

I want to express my appreciation for the chance to visit with you regarding your opening for a Research Analyst. This sounds like an exciting and challenging opportunity, and I want to reaffirm my strong interest in the position.

I was particularly interested in our discussion of the customer surveys you are planning to develop over the next year. As we discussed, I recently completed a similar project where I designed a survey instrument that is now being used on a regular basis to measure customer satisfaction. The experience and expertise gained from this assignment would be especially beneficial in developing an effective tool to meet your needs.

Again, I am very interested in this position and am confident I could make a significant contribution to your market research team and to ABC Corporation as a whole. Thank you again for your time and I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Sincerely,

Im A. Sample V

Im A. Sample V

SAMPLE CORRESPONDENCE
(LETTER OF WITHDRAWAL DURING THE JOB SEARCH)

IM A. SAMPLE
1234 North 55 Street
Bellevue, Nebraska 68005
(402) 292-2345
imasample@xxx.net

(Current Date)

Mary Peterson, Manager
Accounting Department
XYZ Company
10 Dear Park Drive
Omaha, Nebraska 68102

Dear Ms. Peterson:

I am writing to inform you that I am withdrawing my application for the Junior Accountant position we discussed last week. As I indicated then, I have a strong interest in relocating to the West Coast and have been exploring several career opportunities in that area. Earlier this week I was offered and, after careful consideration, have accepted a position with an accounting firm in San Francisco.

I want to express my sincere appreciation for the time and interest you showed in me and my background during our interview. I truly enjoyed meeting you and learning more about XYZ Company and the exciting projects you have planned.

Again, thank you for your consideration. I wish you much success in facing the challenges ahead.

Sincerely,

Im A. Sample

Im A. Sample

SAMPLE CORRESPONDENCE
(LETTER OF REJECTION AFTER A JOB OFFER)

IM A. SAMPLE II
4321 South 55 Street
Bellevue, Nebraska 68005
(402) 291-5432
Imasample2@xxx.net

(Current Date)

Mr. John Smith, Director
Marketing and Public Relations
National NonProfit Association
1234 Farnam Street
Omaha, Nebraska 68112

Dear Mr. Smith:

Thank you for offering me the position of Marketing/Public Relations Intern with your organization. I appreciate your confidence in my ability to handle the many challenges of the position.

The position is indeed one that would make good use of my education and experience while allowing me to enhance and strengthen my overall skills and qualifications. However, after careful consideration, I have decided to pursue other options that will more closely match my long-range career goals.

Again, thank you for your time and consideration. It was a pleasure meeting you and learning more about your organization and marketing strategies.

Sincerely,

Im A. Sample II

Im A. Sample II

SAMPLE CORRESPONDENCE
(LETTER OF ACCEPTANCE AFTER A JOB OFFER)

IM A. SAMPLE III
3456 Westview Road
Bellevue, Nebraska 68005
(402) 291-5678
Imasample3@xxx.com

(Current Date)

Ms. Joan Smith, Manager
Human Resources Department
Telemarketing Corporation
12123 West Center Road
Omaha, Nebraska 68134

Dear Joan:

As we discussed in our phone conversation yesterday, I am pleased to accept your employment offer for the Customer Service Manager position. The position is an excellent match with my skills and experience, and I am confident that I can make a significant contribution to your organization.

As we agreed, I will plan on starting work on July 1, at which time I will complete the necessary paperwork and attend your new employee orientation. I understand that the starting salary will be \$2100 per month.

I look forward to joining your organization and your fine customer service team. Thank you again for your time and assistance through the selection process.

Sincerely,

Im A. Sample III

Im A. Sample III