

## COVER LETTERS, THANK YOU LETTERS, AND REFERENCES

### CREATING A COVER LETTER THAT WILL BE READ

#### What is a cover letter?

A cover letter is a marketing tool used to create interest in you as a candidate. It accompanies your résumé and is written specifically for each organization/position. The goal of the cover letter is to motivate the reader to look at your résumé and ultimately invite you for an interview. A good cover letter will clearly demonstrate how you and your background fit with the particular position and organization.

#### Do I have to write a new cover letter for each job?

Possibly. For similar positions, you can likely use similar letters. However, each letter should be customized specifically for the position and the organization. See “Tailoring Your Cover Letter” below.

#### How do I know what to write about?

1. Read the position listing and highlight important words and phrases from the description.
2. Consider skills you have relevant to the employer’s needs. These may be from a variety of experiences (past jobs, internships, volunteer work, activities, or class projects); it is up to you to “connect the dots” so the employer sees how you meet their needs.
3. Describe two or three experiences, accomplishments, or skills that demonstrate your fit with the position. Be specific and provide examples to support claims. Avoid the temptation to copy wording from sample cover letters and don’t repeat what is on your resume! Be sure to **highlight what you have to offer**, rather than what you have to gain!

#### How can I get help with my cover letter?

The staff in Career Services can help. We have both drop-in hours and appointments where you can meet with a professional who can give you feedback on your cover letter. To learn about drop-in hours or schedule an appointment, call our office at 585-395-2159.

### TAILORING YOUR COVER LETTER

Sample Job Description:

- Provide clinical services for individuals, groups, and families.
- Ability to work collaboratively on an interdisciplinary team creating positive working relationship.

Here is an excerpt from a targeted cover letter that gives specifics, is relevant to the position, and gives solid examples:

Through my experience as a social work intern, I have utilized intensive family therapy for families with children between ages of 5-17 who are experiencing behavioral/emotional crisis. I also participated as a member of an interdisciplinary team to comprehensively assess the functionality and psychosocial issues of young adults who are at risk.

**TIPS FOR A  
STRONG  
COVER LETTER**

- Match your cover letter to your résumé in style, font, and paper.
- Know yourself and the job target; make a connection between the two.
- Expand on your résumé, but don't simply re-list your positions.
- Let your personality shine through.
- Be professional, yet creative and friendly.
- Read it out loud, proofread, and have others look at it for you.

**SAMPLE LETTER FORMAT**

Your Address  
City, State and Zip Code  
Date

Mr./Ms. First and Last Name  
Title  
Name of Firm or Organization  
Street Address  
City, State and Zip Code

Dear Mr./Ms. Last Name:

**First Paragraph:** Indicate the reason for your letter and the position or field of work in which you are interested. If you are applying for a specific opening, state how you learned of the position (i.e. website, CDC's eRecruiting, referral).

**Second Paragraph:** Sell your qualifications for *this position and this position only*. Don't repeat verbatim from your resume. Explain how your academic background, skills and interests, work experience, and/or activities will contribute to their success. Refer to prior achievements in these areas. Communicate your enthusiasm for this type of work and that employer; show why you are interested in this particular employer by illustrating more than superficial knowledge of the particular firm or organization.

**Third Paragraph:** Occasionally it will be necessary to include another paragraph to explain unique situations not easily dealt with on your resume or to expand on your qualifications.

**Final Paragraph:** Refer the reader to the enclosed resume. Courteously indicate your interest in an interview. State if you will be in the area on a certain date and would like to schedule an interview if convenient. Offer to provide any other needed information to support your candidacy. Express appreciation for the employer's consideration.

Sincerely,

(Written signature)

Your name

## SAMPLE LETTER FORMAT

350 New Campus Drive  
Brockport, NY 14420  
September 16, 20XX

Mr. John Smith  
Director of Human Resources  
ABC Corporation  
9640 Main Street  
Rochester, NY 14528

Dear Mr. Smith:

I am interested in applying for the sales representative position recently advertised in the College at Brockport's JobShop database. Ever since I decided to pursue a sales career, ABC Corporation has been at the top of my list of prospective employers. Your company is clearly the market leader in construction products, as evidenced by the Rochester Top 100 distinction. The skills that I have developed from my internship experience and my educational background support my strong interest in this position.

In May, I graduated from The College at Brockport, State University of New York with a Bachelor of Science in Business Administration. As you can see from my résumé, the internship I had with XYZ provided an opportunity for me to gain practical experience with account maintenance and cold calling accounts. In addition, I have worked in the retail field through college and learned how to effectively deal with customers and their demands.

I would very much like an opportunity to speak with you regarding the sales representative position. I will call you last next week to discuss my qualifications for the position. You can reach me by phone at 585-555-5555 or by email at [swalker@gmail.com](mailto:swalker@gmail.com). Thank you for considering me for this position.

Sincerely,

*Sara L. Walker*

Sara L. Walker

## THANK YOU LETTER

Thank you letters are sent after your interview with an organization. They can either be handwritten (if you have nice penmanship) or typed. Opinions differ on whether to send them via email or traditional mail, but all professionals agree that they must be sent. A thank you letter is usually very brief and thanks the interviewer for their time, briefly recaps part of the conversation, and highlights your continued interest in the position.

2594 Taylor St.  
Brockport, NY 14420  
October 25, 2011

Ms. Juanita Keys  
Director of Marketing  
Acme Marketing Company  
24655 Centennial Blvd.  
Buffalo, NY 12346

Dear Ms. Keys:

Thank you for taking the time to interview me for the Marketing Assistant position on October 13<sup>th</sup>. I enjoyed meeting you and learning more about your company's vision for the future.

My enthusiasm for the position and my interest in working for Acme Marketing Company were strengthened as a result of our conversation. I was pleased to learn how well my research on social media marketing related to Acme's current initiative to strengthen client base in that area. I am confident that I would make meaningful contributions to the company.

I would like to reiterate my strong interest in the position and in working with your team. Please contact me at 716-444-5555 if I can provide any additional information. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

*Matthew Simpson*

Matthew Simpson

## REFERENCES

References are listed on a completely separate page from a résumé and are sent when requested from the employer.

- Always ask the person's permission to use him/her as a reference. Asking the question "Would you be comfortable serving as a reference for me?" begins the dialogue. It is usually recommended that you give your reference a copy of your résumé and tell them what types of positions or what degree programs you are applying to.
- A typical set of references might include a professor in your major, a current or former supervisor in an internship, a supervisor from a part-time job, or a current colleague. People who provide your references should be able to share information about your skills and abilities relevant to the types of positions for which you will be applying.

### References for

#### **MELISSA FREDERICKS**

219 West Main St.  
Bolivar, NY 15791  
(716) 555-1212  
mfredericks@yahoo.com

Dr. Roberta Taylor  
Professor of Sociology  
The College at Brockport, State University of New York  
350 New Campus Drive  
Brockport, NY 14420  
585-395-2222  
rtaylor@brockport.edu  
Relationship: Advisor in major

Sam Maxwell  
Manager, Simply Yours  
6594 Route 31  
Rochester, NY 14671  
585-222-1212  
smaxwell@sy.org  
Relationship: Supervisor as employee

Tanya Speaker  
Coordinator of Outreach  
Children's Place  
100 Westfall Road  
Bolivar, NY 15791  
716-555-2222  
tspeaker@cp.org  
Relationship: Supervisor as a volunteer