

Effective Job Search Letters*

Topics Covered

- ◆ Cover Letters for Applying to Job Postings
- ◆ Self-Marketing Letters
- ◆ What Employers Look For
- ◆ Steps to Developing Highly Effective Letters
- ◆ Request for Salary Expectation
- ◆ Other Job Search Letters
 - Thank You Letter
 - Accepting an Offer
 - Declining an Offer
- ◆ Sample Letters
 - Applying for Positions
 - Marketing Yourself
 - Thank You Letters
 - Accepting or Declining an Offer

COVER LETTERS FOR APPLYING TO JOB POSTINGS

An effective cover letter will motivate the Hiring Manager to read your resume. Don't waste all the hard work that you have put into writing a successful resume with a poorly written cover letter!

Cover letters are not simply a front page for your resume. They are an important part of your application, offering you the opportunity to showcase your professionalism, skills, personality and connection with the organization that you are applying to.

A cover letter is persuasive in nature. Your aim is to show the employer that you have the skills and experience they are seeking. Your letter should be written to reflect your personality, encouraging the reader to want to know you better through reading your resume and conducting a personal interview.

Discuss your Skills & Experience RELATED to the position to which you are applying.

When emailing cover letters used for applying to job postings:

Try to shorten your cover letter to three paragraphs so that it is no longer than one screen. Use the subject line to identify the name of the job. Send email in plain text – black font, normal size and typeface (10 point, Arial, Helvetica, Times New Roman) – on a white background.

SELF-MARKETING LETTERS

It is estimated that over 80% of positions are not advertised. To take a more proactive approach to your job search, you may wish to **directly contact a company you are interested in working for**. There are two methods in identifying your targets.

1. COMPANY AND INDUSTRY RESEARCH:

To effectively attract the employer's interest, ensure your letter explains how your skills and experience match their needs. Base your rationale on your company and industry research, and your analysis of how you add value to the organization.

Company research assists you to explain WHY you are interested in working for that company & HOW your skills & experience are relevant to their needs.

2. NETWORKING LEAD / MUTUAL CONTACT:

Networking leads are one of the best means to opening the door to an interview. In your approach letter explain that a mutual contact suggested you contact the employer.

When e-mailing approach letters used for Self-Marketing:

In the "subject" line reference your networking contact, i.e. "RE: conversation with Sam Black", or note the area of the company you are targeting, i.e. "RE: Corporate Finance Opportunities". Write a brief cover letter and attach your resume.

WHAT EMPLOYERS LOOK FOR

A well-written letter speaks about the benefits you bring to the job – your expertise, your mastery of technology, your personal attributes, and how the company will benefit from hiring you. Your letter should illustrate:

1. **Skills and experience** you have which **match** the employer's **needs**.

For example, if the job posting says you are required to:

“analyze policies and procedures to enhance inventory efficiency.”

Your letter should highlight your related experience and skills:

“My transportation and logistics class projects involved analyzing inventory control systems and recommending changes to existing procedures to increase efficiency.”

Employers examine your cover letter to assess:

- Do you have the skills & experience we require?
- Are you very interested in working for our firm?
- Do you have a good knowledge of the industry and our firm?
- How strong are your communication skills?
- Are there any spelling or grammar errors?

2. **Keen interest** in working with their company shown by your research and your ability to identify where you can add value in the company.
3. **Knowledge** of the industry and that particular career area.
4. **Strong written communication skills:** able to clearly express yourself in a concise and focused manner.
5. **Attention to detail** – no spelling or grammatical errors and cover letter is signed.
6. **Your personality** – the cover letter is your opportunity to showcase your enthusiasm and positive attitude. Unlike your resume, you can use conversational (but still professional) language. Be honest and genuine to give the Hiring Manager an insight into your personality. Remember, they want to hire someone that their other employees will like and get on with!

STEPS TO DEVELOPING HIGHLY EFFECTIVE LETTERS

Step 1 ~ ANALYZE THE POSITION

After examining a job posting, and/or researching a career area you need to answer the following:

- **What qualifications are necessary?**

Most job postings will list required skills, education and experience.

If you are unsure, you can use a website such as Wordle or Worditout to establish the keywords in the job description.

- **Do I have the skills, education and experience required to meet the employer's needs?**

Rule of thumb: If you have at least 60% of the skills and qualifications requested by an employer, apply for the position.

Note: employers do not hire based solely on your education. Your transferable skills, previous work and volunteer experience are also very important.

- **Am I interested in the company, the industry and this line of work?**

Employers can quickly assess if a potential candidate is interested in working for them, or just blanketing the market with resumes in an attempt to get a job. Make your cover letter stand out by explaining why you are interested in working for **their** company.

ANALYZE THE JOB POSTING:

- **What are the qualifications required?**

- **Ask yourself, "Where have I developed these qualifications?"**

- **Consider your paid and volunteer work, your activities and class projects.**

- **Tailor your cover letter to match these qualifications.**

With the above information identified, develop a marketing or cover letter which clearly answers these questions:

- WHAT skills and experience do I offer which match the company's needs?
- WHY do I want to work for that company?
- HOW will I add value to the company? (Choose your top three skills.)

Step 2 ~ APPROPRIATE CONTENT AND FORMAT

Recruiters have requested that your **one-page** letter include:

1. Your **Letterhead**: include your name, address, postal code, phone number, e-mail address and web page (if applicable and professional). Keep this format consistent with your resume.
2. **Date**
3. **Contact Name and Title**
4. **Company Address**
5. **Dear** _____ (contact person – use Mr. or Ms.). **NEVER USE** “To Whom It May Concern” or “Dear Sir or Madame”. If you do not know the contact person’s name, do your research! Look online or contact the company to find out who you should address the letter. As a last resort, if no name is available, use “Dear Hiring Manager”.
6. **Subject Line** (recommended) indicating which competition or position you are applying for. (i.e. Marketing Assistant)
7. **Body** of your letter: normally 3 to 4 paragraphs
8. **Closing** line: use “Sincerely”, “Regards” or “Yours truly”.
9. Your **Signature**
10. Notation of an **Enclosure**

**Recruiters strongly
request: ONE PAGE
cover letters**

FORMAT:

- **NO** spelling or grammatical errors
- Single-spaced, double spaces between paragraphs
- A maximum of one page, ideally no longer than half a page
- Font size 10-11
- Standard light coloured, plain bond 8.5 x 11 paper (matching resume)
- Written in full sentences and/or include bulleted points
- Concise, eliminate unnecessary words
- Minimum 1” margins

**Even ONE spelling or grammar
error can result in your application
being rejected**

Step 3 ~ ATTRACTING THE EMPLOYER'S ATTENTION

Hiring Managers see a lot of cover letters, many of which are similar, generic and simply a repetition of the information already included on the resume. Follow the steps below to create a cover letter which will attract the employer's attention and make them want to read your resume.

1. Contact Information:

- Address your letter to a specific person if at all possible.
- Ensure their name and title is correctly spelled.
- Ensure that you are using the correct title (i.e. Mr. or Ms. If you are unsure check LinkedIn or the company website).
- Research or call the company to find out who is the key person in charge of the department that might hire you.
- As a last resort, use "Dear Hiring Manager".

**AVOID using:
Dear Sir or Madame
or
To Whom it May Concern.**

2. Why I am writing (first paragraph):

This is your opportunity to spark the reader's interest. Make a point of noting:

- If you have been referred by a mutual contact.
- Your research into their company (product knowledge, recent news, mission statement).
- Why they are the one company that you want to work for. Personalize your letter for them as much as possible so that they know this isn't a generic letter that you have sent out to numerous employers. It's time consuming, but worth it.
- How you feel a genuine connection to their company (are you a long-term user of their product/services? Have you recommended their product to your friends? Have you previously volunteered for them?).
- How you can add value to their company.
- Try to avoid starting with "My name is..." or "I am applying for your position at...". Your address block and subject line have already told them this information.

Example of an Attention Grabbing First Paragraphs (DO NOT COPY):

"Having grown up as a regular visitor to Vancouver Aquarium, I understand firsthand how you've earned your reputation as one of the most family-friendly tourist attractions in BC. For 15 years, I've been impressed as your customer; now I want to impress visitors in the same way your team has so graciously done for me."

In the body of the letter you must clearly identify that you have the specific skills the employer requires.

- Highlight your qualifications, which are related to that job. Choose your top three matches. It is not necessary to address all the requirements of the job. You want to quickly grab the reader's attention to entice them to read your resume for further details.
- Give specific examples of your skills.
- State or illustrate specific product, company and industry knowledge.
- Use action verbs when summarizing your experience, skills, and qualifications (see Job Description Verbs on page 17).
- Limit the use of the word "I". You are focusing on meeting the employer's needs, not your own.
- Ruthlessly eliminate unnecessary words; be concise.
- Avoid any negative language.
- Avoid focusing on what you want; be employer-centered.

Stress accomplishments and achievements to demonstrate that you will add value to the company

4. What steps will I take to make sure we talk further about my qualifications (last paragraph):

- Reaffirm your interest in working with that company. Ask for an interview.
- Tell the employer you will make contact within a specific period of time (such as a week or 10 days) if appropriate...then DO IT.
- If follow-up is not possible or appropriate, be sure to let the reader know how they can contact you during business hours.

REQUEST FOR SALARY EXPECTATION

Some job postings ask you to provide your salary expectations. Before answering, consider that a good applicant is rarely denied an interview based on omitting salary expectation. Keep in mind that the phrase "negotiable" has become somewhat annoying to recruiters but again, is not likely grounds for refusing an interview. If you choose to indicate your salary expectation, do your industry research, and don't restrict yourself to one figure – give a salary range.

Salary info is available in the "Interview Strategies" handout available at Student Employment Services, Birch 270 or at www.capilanou.ca/ses

OTHER JOB SEARCH LETTERS

Thank You Letters

As discussed in the *Interview Strategies* handout, it is vitally important to send a thank you letter within 24 hours after an employment interview. Even if you do not receive an offer, you will present a much better image to the company by following up with a thank you letter.

Should it be an email or handwritten note? It can be either. Take some clues from the person interviewing you. If you developed a more “personal” rapport with the interviewer, a handwritten note might be preferred as long as it will be received within 24 hours of the interview. Otherwise, send an email.

ALWAYS send a thank you letter after an interview, to each person that has interviewed you.

Your thank you letter should be short and can include the following elements:

- Start by thanking the interviewer for taking the time to talk with you. Include the date of the interview and something of interest that you learned.
- Reaffirm your interest in the firm by pointing out particular issues discussed during the interview that appeal to you. This is also a perfect opportunity to talk about some of your skills or background that match the position, but you didn’t get a chance to discuss during the interview.
- If appropriate, you can include a link to an article or website that you discussed during your interview.

ACCEPTING AN OFFER

Congratulations, you’ve landed a job! Even though you have accepted the position over the telephone, it is important to confirm your acceptance in writing to confirm the details and formally accept the job. Include in your letter your understanding of the terms of your employment: job title, start date, starting salary, benefits and any other pertinent information.

Confirming a job offer in writing can clarify any misunderstanding of the job.

If you are being considered for positions with other companies, it is important to let them know that you have accepted another offer.

DECLINING AN OFFER

If a company has extended a job offer and you have decided not to accept, you need to advise the company both over the phone and then confirm in writing. Normally, the reason will be acceptance of another job; or you may have decided that the job is simply not a good fit for you.

Your declining letter should thank the employer for the opportunity and briefly cite the reason for the decline (i.e. acceptance of another offer, etc.) Maintain your professionalism both over the phone and in your letter and avoid any negativity. Remember this employer may be a contact for you sometime in the future.

REMEMBER . . .

Proofreading

Proofread each letter a **minimum of 3 times** to ensure all spelling and grammatical errors have been identified. Many employers will eliminate applications based on just ONE spelling or grammatical error. Why take that chance!

One Last Check

Before you send out your cover letter, ask yourself:

- Did I use the correct spelling of all names and addresses?
- Have I proofread my letter for spelling and grammatical errors?
- Does my letter clearly show I have the skills needed for this position?
- Have I indicated how I can be contacted (phone, email)?
- Is my letter a maximum of one page long?
- Did I sign my letter?

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

Refer to the following books at the Library:

Best Canadian Cover Letters by Sharon Graham

Winning Cover Letters by Robin Ryan

Cover Letters that Knock'em Dead by Martin Yate

Best Key Words for Resumes, Cover Letters and Interviews by Wendy S. Enelow,
CPRW, JCTC, CCM

SAMPLE COVER LETTER – based on a Job Posting

JASMINDER SAMI

10022 West 12th Avenue
Vancouver, BC V6V 6V6

(604) 555-5555
jsami@email.com

Nov. XX, 200X

Ms. Marie Fisher
Marketing Director
Ceaport Software Inc.
468 West Georgia, Suite 1401
Vancouver, BC V5H 4R1

**Note: Do NOT copy this
sample word-for-word.**

Dear Ms. Fisher:

Re: Part-time Marketing Assistant

Ceaport Software's success as a developer of innovative CRM solutions software is evident in recently landing a \$3M sale to a major US manufacturer. I am excited about the possibility of contributing my market research knowledge and enthusiasm to such a dynamic company.

I am currently a third year student at the Capilano School of Business specializing in marketing. My qualifications include a class project involving the development of marketing plans for a high tech business launching products into Latin America. Additionally, as a Corporate Marketing Representative for the CBUS Banquet Committee, I promoted new corporate sponsorships to local organizations resulting in a 10% increase in donations. My achievement of strong customer satisfaction through excellent service has been consistently recognized by my managers.

My marketing background and genuine desire to develop a marketing career in the high tech industry will make me a valuable employee to Ceaport Software and I would welcome an opportunity to discuss my potential fit with you in person. I can be reached at (604) 555-5555.

Thank you for your time and consideration of my application. I look forward to the opportunity to meet with you.

Your truly,

Jasminder Sami

Enclosure

SAMPLE MARKETING LETTER – based on Company Research

STEVEN XU

11116 S.W. Marine Drive
Vancouver, BC V7V 7V7
stevenxu@email.com
604.555.2222

November XX, 200X

Mr. John Sem
Human Resources
Summit Capital
888 Westley Drive
Toronto, ON M5M N3N

**Note: Do NOT copy this
sample word-for-word.**

Dear Mr. Sem:

Congratulations on your recent expansion into the Asian market with the opening of your offices in Hong Kong and Shanghai as recently reported in the “Globe and Mail”. As a highly motivated finance student with a strong interest in the Asian investment banking industry, I am eager to contribute my analytical and personal communication skills in an Analyst role within your dynamic organization.

Some of my qualifications which would be of value to Summit Capital Asia include:

- Solid understanding and training in financial modeling, financial valuation, and risk management.
- Retail brokerage experience with RBC Dominion Securities sourcing clients and promoting services.
- Participation in TD Waterhouse Student Stock Shadowing Program involving on-line mock trading within the high tech and biotech industries.
- High academic achievement including Dean’s List 2007, 2008; Golden Key Honors Society member.
- Expected completion of Canadian Securities Course in February 2009.

Additionally, I speak Cantonese and Mandarin and I am also eligible for Hong Kong citizenship.

I would welcome an opportunity to discuss possible openings within your Hong Kong branch. I will contact you next week to see if we can arrange a brief meeting at your convenience.

Thank you for considering my request.

Sincerely,

Steven Xu

Steven Xu

Enclosure

SAMPLE MARKETING LETTER – based on Networking Lead

Susan Smith
3323 Campus Road
Vancouver, BC V7V 7V7
ssmith@email.com
(604) 555-8888

November XX 200X

Marcia Newhouse
Manager, Marketing
IXS Warehousing & Distribution Ltd.
888 Queens Drive
Calgary, Alberta T2P 2P2

**Note: Do NOT copy this
Sample word-for-word.**

Dear Ms. Newhouse:

While attending a Capilano Undergraduate Business Society event, I met your colleague, Mr. Myron Davies. He mentioned that you recently secured a major contract and as a result may have a need for a Transportation Analyst. As I am pursuing a career in distribution and will be graduating in May 2005 with a Business Administration degree, Mr. Davies suggested that I contact you to explore possible opportunities with IXS.

As part of my TLog training, I have actively participated in several class projects involving in-depth analysis and applying models to solve transportation and logistics problems. During my experience as a warehousing clerk at Canadian Widget Warehousing, I developed a strong understanding of the need for effective inventory control measures, and the importance of communication with all members of the supply chain. Additionally, I was selected by management to train warehousing clerks on the use of a newly implemented computerized inventory system, Xspeed.

I would greatly appreciate the opportunity to meet with you to discuss how my experience and education can contribute to your team. I will contact you next week to see if we can arrange a brief meeting at your convenience.

Thank you for taking the time to consider my request.

Sincerely,

Susan Smith

Susan Smith

Enclosure

SAMPLE THANK YOU LETTER – after a job interview

Ryan Wei

54508 West 54th Avenue, Vancouver, BC V8V 4V4

Telephone: (604) 555-1111

email: ryanwei@email.com

October XX, 200X

Ms. Maria Rosetti,
Manager, Human Resources
DKPE and Partners
555 Dunsmuir Street
Vancouver, BC V7X 1Z6

**Note: Do NOT copy this
sample word-for-word.**

Dear Ms. Rosetti:

Thank you very much for providing the opportunity to interview with you for the CA articling position with your firm. I am impressed with the enthusiasm and interest that you demonstrated during our meeting, even though it was the end of a very long day for you.

I am excited about the possibility of joining DKPE and I am convinced that I possess many of the qualities that you described as desirable in a “new recruit”. My involvement in many on-campus student organizations has strengthened my ability to lead and participate in productive teams. In my role as “Master of Ceremonies” for the Capilano Business Banquet, I developed ongoing positive relationships with senior executives in the business community. This experience has prepared me to represent DKPE in a professional manner to its clients. The energy and commitment I have made to my education, part-time work and extra-curricular activities will continue as I launch my professional accounting career.

Again, I truly appreciate the time you spent with me on Wednesday and I look forward to hearing from you after you have completed the rest of your on-campus interviews.

Yours truly,

Ryan Wei

Ryan Wei

SAMPLE JOB ACCEPTANCE LETTER

Suzanne Ducharme

#302 – 11718 Cypress Street, Vancouver, BC V8V 4T4 Telephone: (604) 555-9999 email: sducharme@email.com

January XX, 200X

**Note: Do NOT copy this
sample word-for-word.**

Mrs. Julie Nakamoto
HR Manager
ABC Financial Group
500 Howe Street
Vancouver, BC V7X 2J8

Dear Ms. Nakamoto:

Thank you for your letter offering me the position of Equity Analyst with your Vancouver office. As we discussed on the phone this morning, I am pleased to accept this offer and look forward to becoming part of the ABC Financial Group team.

I understand the starting salary will be \$38,000 per year and I will be starting on June 1, 200X. In the meantime, if you require any additional information from me, please let me know.

Again, thank you for offering this exciting opportunity to start my career with your company.

Yours truly,

Suzanne Ducharme

Suzanne Ducharme

SAMPLE DECLINING A JOB OFFER LETTER

Daniel Gill
33445 Thunderbird Way
Vancouver, BC V7V 7V7
dgill@email.com
(604) 555-3333

November XX, 200X

**Note: Do NOT copy this
sample word-for-word.**

Mr. Harv Wright
Product Manager
Xcel Consumer Products
13895 Viking Way
Richmond, BC V5W 3M9

Dear Mr. Wright:

Thank you very much for your telephone call and letter offering me the position of Product Support Specialist. While this is a very exciting position within a well-respected organization, I have accepted a position with another company that more closely aligns with my career goals and interests. As I explained on the phone this morning, this was a very difficult decision, since both companies offered challenging and rewarding opportunities.

I would like to extend once again my sincere appreciation for your interest and hospitality throughout the interview process and I wish you well in the future.

Sincerely,

Daniel Gill

Daniel Gill

What's wrong with this letter?

The cover letter is your first opportunity to make a favorable impression on a potential employer. It is an important tool that will pique a potential employer's interest and get you to the next stage...the interview. Even if your qualifications are excellent, your resume may never be read if your cover letter is weak. Find out if you are cover letter literate.

<p><i>Full name (not nickname) should be used</i></p>	<p>Jimmy Jobless 1234 Unemployed Ave. _____ Anywereville, BC</p>	<p><i>Use proper mailing address</i></p>	
	<p>October 7, 2004 _____ GeneriCo Ltd. 4321 Business St. V4V 3K3</p>	<p><i>Use standard Business Letter format (double space between new paragraphs and sections)</i></p>	<p><i>The letter should be limited to no more than four paragraphs</i></p>
<p><i>Refer to specific job title, as advertised by the company (include reference number, if known)</i></p>	<p>To Whom It May Concern: _____ Re: Assistant Position</p>	<p><i>Address your letter to a specific contact name</i></p>	
<p><i>List & give evidence of specific skills relevant to the position (name software programs)</i></p>	<p>Please accept this letter and resume as an application for the position advertised. I am confident that I can make a positive contribution to your company.</p> <p>I have many skills and abilities that could benefit your organization. I am computer literate and have strong communication skills. I have the ability to asses problems and provide effective solutions. My personal interests include computer programming and web site design.</p>		<p><i>This opening is boring. Use this first paragraph to grab the reader's attention</i></p> <p><i>Explain how unrelated past work experience is relevant (mention transferable skills)</i></p>
<p><i>Have someone else proofread – don't rely on the computer's spell check: "I have the ability to <u>asses</u> problems..."</i></p>	<p>While I lack formal work experience as a receptionist, I have several years of experience in the construction industry. At my previous job, my duties included organizing billing and estimates, and scheduling projects for customers.</p>		
<p><i>Avoid using negative phrases ("lack", "weak")</i></p>	<p>Because of my strong self-motivated skills and my ability to work well with people, I feel that I would be an excellent addition to your company. In accordance with my education and work experience, I would expect a starting salary of \$10K, annually.</p>		
<p><i>Never include salary expectations, unless requested to do so</i></p>	<p>Thank you for your time and consideration. I'll contact you next week to set up an interview at your convenience.</p>		<p><i>Express an interest in meeting with the employer but avoid using pressuring statements</i></p>
<p><i>Use a formal closing (Yours truly, Sincerely)</i></p>	<p>Thank you, (signature) Jimmy Jobless Encl.</p>	<p><i>Contractions or slang should never be used</i></p>	

JOB DESCRIPTION VERBS

Accomplished	Displayed	Judged	Released
Accumulated	Directed	Justified	Rendered
Achieved	Discussed		Renegotiated
Acquired		Launched	Renovated
Activated	Edited	Learned	Repaired
Adapted	Eliminated	Listened	Replayed
Adjusted	Encouraged		Reported
Administered	Enforced	Maintained	Researched
Amended	Ensured	Managed	Resolved
Analyzed	Established	Manipulated	Responded
Appraised	Estimated	Mediated	Reviewed
Approved	Evaluated	Merged	Revised
Arranged	Exceeded	Modulated	
Assembled	Executed	Molded	Satisfied
Assigned	Expanded	Monitored	Scheduled
Attained	Expedited	Motivated	Selected
Authorized	Explained		Serviced
	Extracted	Negotiated	Settled
Budgeted			Simplified
Built	Facilitated	Observed	Sold
	Finalized	Operated	Sorted
Calculated	Followed up	Organized	Stimulated
Catalogued	Forecasted		Strengthened
Classified	Foresaw	Participated	Studied
Coached	Formulated	Perceived	Succeeded
Communicated	Fostered	Performed	Summarized
Compared		Persuaded	Supervised
Compiled	Gathered	Planned	Supported
Completed	Generated	Prepared	Synthesized
Composed	Guided	Presented	Systematized
Computed		Presided	
Conceived	Headed	Problem Solved	Taught
Conducted	Hired	Produced	Tended
Conferred		Programmed	Tested
Consolidated	Implemented	Projected	Trained
Constructed	Improved	Promoted	Transferred
Consulted	Increased	Proposed	Transformed
Controlled	Indexed	Provided	Translated
Convinced	Influenced	Purchased	Troubleshooting
Coordinated	Informed		
Created	Initiated	Questioned	Unified
	Inspected		Unraveled
Designed	Installed	Realigned	Utilized
Developed	Instituted	Recognized	
Debated	Instructed	Recommended	Verified
Defined	Integrated	Reconciled	Viewed
Delegated	Interpreted	Recruited	
Delivered	Interviewed	Rectified	
Demonstrated	Introduced	Reduced	
Determined	Invented	Referred	
Diagnosed	Investigated	Regulated	

*This document (Effective Job Search Letters) was prepared by the Sauder School of Business, University of British Columbia.