



## COVER LETTERS

### LETTER WRITING

Depending on your particular purpose, a cover letter can be described as a letter of application or a letter of introduction. It might also be called a letter of intent, a letter of interest, or a letter of inquiry. It is a professional tool used when you are applying for a job (as a responder to a posted position) or when you are networking (as someone who is initiating contact with a prospective employer). When you send your resume to an employer, it should always be accompanied by a well-written one-page formal cover letter.

Whether it is a printed hard copy letter, a letter attached to an e-mail, or the text of an e-mail message, your cover letter should be written in standard professional business letter format. It should be a personal letter, but not written in an informal or casual style. It should adopt a professional tone. It should be addressed to a specific individual, at a specific company or organization, and making reference to a specific job or opportunity.

Avoid salutations that sound too impersonal or too general, like *Dear Sir* or *Dear Sir/Madam* or *To Whom It May Concern*. The letter should be single spaced. Use active rather than passive voice. Edit carefully, double-checking for spelling, grammar, or typographical errors. When sending a printed hardcopy cover letter (or a cover letter document attached to an e-mail), the font, brand (style), and letterhead of your cover letter should match your resume.

### PROPER FORMAT

The header (or letterhead) of your cover letter should match the header of your resume.

The first item under the header is the current date.

A formal cover letter has an address block, which includes the name and title of person and a mailing address.

The salutation should use a formal title (Mr., Ms., Dr.) followed by the person's last name.

The first paragraph is your objective. Tell the reason why you are writing the letter. It should be short, simple, and direct. Include the name of the company and the position or department in the description of your objective.

The second paragraph is your summary statement. It should be straight-forward and factual description of your qualifications. Provide a brief overview of your education, experience, and skills.

The third paragraph is your action statement. Express your desire for a meeting to learn more about the job and the company. Ask for the interview. Indicate that you will follow up.

End with a complimentary closing, such as *Sincerely*, *Cordially*, *Best Regards*, *Best Wishes*, or *Respectfully*.

### Your Name

Your Address, City, State Zip Code  
Phone Number, E-Mail Address

Date

Name  
Title or Department  
Company  
Address  
City, State Zip Code

Dear (Mr., Ms., Dr.):

Paragraph One. State your objective and mention the job position by specific title, by general function, or by department.

Paragraph Two. Give a brief summary or overview of your education, skills and experience as they relate to the job qualifications.

Paragraph Three. Express an interest in learning more about the company and the job. Request an interview. Indicate that you will follow up.

Sincerely,

Your Name

## **PROFESSIONAL LETTER WRITING**

A cover letter can be mailed as a printed hard copy letter along with a resume in an envelope. It can be attached to an e-mail message along with an attached resume (both documents should be converted to PDF format). Or it can be the actual text in the body of an e-mail message. Regardless of the platform used, the tone, language, content, and organization of the cover letter must be professional.

If you are initiating contact with a prospective employer, your cover letter is a letter of introduction. It is sometimes called a networking letter. As such, its tone is more exploratory and open-ended and the language is more general.

If you are responding to a posted announcement, your cover letter is a letter of application. As such, its tone is slightly more assertive and the language is more specific.

## **INTRODUCTION LETTER TEMPLATE**

I am writing to express my interest in exploring career opportunities in (Area of Interest, Job Function, Name of Department) with (Name of Company).

I will be graduating in (Month and Year) from the University of Montevallo with a Bachelor of Science degree in (Major Concentration). I have comprehensive training in and a thorough academic knowledge of (Coursework, Curriculum, Academic Focus). I have extensive experience in (Job Functions, Specific Industry, Area of Specialty). I possess strong (Relevant Skills and Competencies) skills and excellent (Relevant Skills and Competencies) abilities.

I would like to meet with you at your convenience to learn more about (Name of Company) and opportunities in (Area of Interest, Job Function, Name of Department). I will contact you next week to follow up. Thank you for your consideration.

## **APPLICATION LETTER TEMPLATE**

I am writing to submit my application for the (Job Title) position with (Name of Company).

I will be graduating in (Month and Year) from the University of Montevallo with a Bachelor of Science degree in (Major Concentration). I have comprehensive training in and a thorough academic knowledge of (Coursework, Curriculum, Academic Focus). I have extensive experience in (Job Functions, Specific Industry, Area of Specialty). I possess strong (Relevant Skills and Competencies) skills and excellent (Relevant Skills and Competencies) abilities.

I would like to be considered for the (Job Title) position with (Name of Company). I feel confident I can meet your requirements. I look forward to hearing from you regarding my qualifications. Thank you for your consideration.

## **SAMPLE INTRODUCTION LETTER**

I am writing to express my interest in exploring career opportunities in the Marketing Department of Superior Products Company.

I will be graduating in May 2018 from the University of Montevallo with a Bachelor of Science degree in Business Administration. I have comprehensive training in and a thorough academic knowledge of marketing principles, brand management, advertising and promotions, market research, consumer behavior, and professional sales. I have extensive experience in sales, event planning, public relations, and customer service. I possess strong planning and organizational abilities and excellent administrative and interpersonal skills.

I would like to meet with you at your convenience to learn more about Superior Products Company and opportunities in marketing. I will contact you next week. Thank you for your consideration.

## **NETWORKING THROUGH LETTER WRITING**

Most networking letters are a means of generating an initial meeting or as a point of introduction. Perhaps you are seeking an informational interview or a job shadowing opportunity. The purpose of such a meeting is to obtain career advice, learn about the industry, gather additional referrals, and hear about first-hand job experiences pertaining to your particular field. A networking letter is a way to introduce yourself to people in the industry and initiate contact with key players in your field.

It is best to approach this kind of correspondence more as a way to learn more about the profession than to apply for a job. You are trying to establish rapport, ask for information, and seek advice. This letter is about relationship-building. This career exploration tool lets you reach out to friends, friends of friends, and professional contacts, asking for career advice, referrals, introductions, and job leads. The letter's focus is not to request their assistance in your career exploration efforts by connecting you with people or opportunities.

Most networking letters are initiated at the suggestion of a mutual acquaintance. If this is the case, let the person know who referred you. If not, you should find a logical reason for contacting that particular person. Perhaps you recently attended a seminar of theirs or read an article about them. Your letter should state specifically what you hope to gain from the meeting. You should be polite and to the point and express your appreciation for their time and consideration.

Your letter should be simple and straightforward. You'll need to engage the reader's interest and reflect your professionalism. You might be seeking an informational interview or a job shadowing opportunity. Ask for their advice, insight, suggestions, or ideas. Ask for leads and information. Your letter should be very respectful and somewhat formal. The tone should be exploratory and open-ended. Give them a bit of your background and where you want to go in your career, but leave out your whole resume. It's not about getting a job, it's about getting advice.

Perhaps you have met someone either at a professional networking event or in an informal setting or reception and you would like to meet them again talk to them in more detail. Perhaps you have been given the name of a relevant contact by a friend or colleague who knows you are interested in a particular career field. Perhaps you have discovered the name of a potentially valuable contact through your own market or industry research or an article you have read. If you are following up after a networking event, remind them where you met or explain how you come to have their details (You have a mutual acquaintance or you read about them in a recent press report). Explain who you are and why you are writing. Make it clear that you are not looking for a job at the moment, but are seeking a meeting so you can further your knowledge of a certain career area. Acknowledge that you are asking a favor and make it clear that you only want 15-20 minutes of their time, at their convenience. If you are contacting someone you have not met before, you may wish to invite them to suggest an alternative contact if they are not the right person for you to speak to. End your networking letter by letting them know you will contact them by phone in the next few days to discuss a possible appointment.

## **SAMPLE NETWORKING LETTER**

My neighbor, Ms. Jones, told me that you were a practicing actuary. She recommended you as a good person to talk to about the actuary industry.

I graduated from the University of Montevallo with a Bachelor of Science degree in Mathematics. I have extensive mathematics, managerial, administrative, sales, and customer service experience. I possess strong quantitative, mathematical, analytical, technical, and interpersonal skills. My career goal is to be an actuary.

I would like to get your advice. How does someone with my career ambitions go about learning more about the field of actuary? How does someone with my background explore her career options? What insights would you be willing to offer an aspiring professional like myself? I am writing to see if you would be willing to meet with me, either in person or by telephone, to share some of your expertise with me.

I'd be grateful for the opportunity to speak with you briefly at your convenience.

## MORE SAMPLE COVER LETTERS

Dear Mr. Smith:

I am writing to express my interest in exploring career opportunities in marketing with Superior Products Company.

I will be graduating in May 2012 from the University of Montevallo with a Bachelor of Science degree in Business Administration. I have comprehensive training in and a thorough academic knowledge of marketing principles, brand management, advertising and promotions, market research, consumer behavior, and professional sales. I have extensive experience in sales, event planning, public relations, and customer service. I possess strong planning and organizational abilities and excellent administrative and interpersonal skills.

I would like to meet with you at your convenience to learn more about Superior Products Company and opportunities in marketing. I will contact you next week. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,  
Tom. T. Tuttle

Dear Dr. Jones:

I am writing to express my interest in exploring career opportunities in health care with St. Vincent's Hospital.

I will be graduating in May 2012 from University of Montevallo with a Bachelor of Science degree in Biology. I have comprehensive training in and a thorough academic knowledge of biology, chemistry, and health-related concepts. I have extensive medical, research, and community service experience. I possess strong science and research abilities and excellent technical and analytical skills.

I would like to meet with you at your convenience to learn more about St. Vincent's Hospital and opportunities in health care. I will contact you next week. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,  
Linda Q. Friendly

Dear Ms. Thomas:

I am writing to express my interest in exploring career opportunities in journalism with Deep South Magazine.

I will be graduating in May 2013 from the University of Montevallo with a Bachelor of Arts degree in English. I have comprehensive training in and a thorough academic knowledge of English language, literature, and grammar. I have extensive experience in writing, editing, and researching. I possess strong creative abilities and excellent writing and editing skills. I have strong research and information gathering skills.

I would like to meet with you at your convenience to learn more about Deep South Magazine and opportunities in journalism. I will contact you next week. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,  
Alice B. Wonder