

TIPS FOR CREATING AN EFFECTIVE COVER LETTER

- Collect your thoughts. Your ideas may not come out logically or sequentially, but write them down. Don't judge and evaluate, simply collect them.
- Spend time on your letter. As the adage goes, "With part-time effort, you get part-time results."
- Write a draft, let it cool off overnight, and then rewrite if necessary.
- Use a strong close, e.g., "After you have had an opportunity to review this letter, I will call you..." Avoid weak endings such as "I look forward to your reply" or "Please call me at your earliest convenience."
- Limit your letter to one page; a letter is an opportunity to sell, so say something about you, while also focusing on the needs of the employer. Write the way you talk. It should be well-worded, concise, and controlled in the use of the pronoun "I".
- While a general cover letter can be used, best results come from personalizing each letter to fit the specific circumstances, position, or organization.
- Ask for opinions, advice, and feedback from friends, a counselor, or someone in the profession. Check spelling and grammar.
- Avoid cluttered desktop publishing. Business letters should look conservative. If you want to be creative, do so in your choice of words. It should be aesthetically appealing with careful attention to spacing and format. Use letter-quality printer paper or high-quality bond paper. Stick with white, ivory, or off-white.
- Remember to sign it personally and include your telephone number and email address.
- Don't use someone else's letter. If you are using the same letter for several companies, remember to change the name in the body of your letter.

- Devise a system to keep track of the follow-up steps you will take and the responses you receive. Most students have found that binders or file folders for organizing the job search and its correspondence are essential.
- Follow up, follow up. People will call you, but you'll improve your odds dramatically if you follow up your letters with a phone call.
- Don't mark letters "personal and confidential" unless there is a solid reason why a secretary or an administrative assistant can't open them. If your letter is persuasive enough, it will get through.

COVER LETTERS ONLINE

More and more job seekers are asked to send their resumes and cover letters online. These letters are about half the length of a regular cover letter. It is important to mention in your letter how you found out about the position, what you are looking for, and what you have to offer. You might also mention a few key words the organization might want to hear. Most importantly, be succinct. Most experts recommend that you compose your cover letter off-line first before importing it into an outgoing email message.

CDC RESOURCES

Publications available at the CDC Career Resource Library:

- *Resumes and Cover Letters by Stanford Students*, a Binder of Examples
- *Cover Letters That Knock 'em Dead*, Yate
- *201 Dynamite Job Search Letters*, Krannich & Krannich
- *Vault Guide to Resumes, Cover Letters & Interviewing*, Leifman, et al. (available via your Vault Career Insider account at studentaffairs.stanford.edu/cdc/services/career-library).
- *The ABOUT.com Guide to Job Searching*, Doyle



COVER LETTERS

The cover letter provides you with an opportunity to introduce yourself and state your objective, personalize your resume, and highlight information that addresses the needs and interests of the employer. Bear in mind that letters you write not only convey your interest and qualifications, but also give the employer an opportunity to observe your attentiveness to detail, spelling, grammar, and the overall quality of your written communication. *Flaws in your letters will often be interpreted as flaws in your qualifications.*

Address

City, ST Zip Code
Date

Name
Title
Company/Organization Name
Address
City, ST Zip Code

Dear Mr./Ms. Last Name:

Opening Paragraph:

What is your intent in writing this letter? What position are you applying for and how did you learn about it?

Briefly introduce yourself, your major, and the degree anticipated. If you are aware of a specific opening, refer to it. If you are not aware of a specific position, state your area of interest. This paragraph can also be used to refer to the individual who recommended that you contact the organization, or other factors that prompted you to write. If possible, convey why you are interested in the organization and anything you know about their product or service.

Second Paragraph:

What are your qualifications? Why do you want to work for this organization? What would you enjoy doing for them? Sell yourself and be brief. Whet the employer's appetite so that he/she will want to read your resume and schedule an interview.

Describe highlights from your background that would be of greatest interest to the organization. Focus on skills, activities, accomplishments, and past experience you can contribute to the organization and its work. If possible, demonstrate that you know something about the organization and industry/field. Use action verbs that describe relevant skills and expertise you can contribute. Mention specific knowledge you may have such as computer applications, foreign languages, lab techniques, writing and editing capabilities. You are attempting to create a match or "notion of fit" between the employer's hiring needs and your interests, experience, and skills.

Third Paragraph:

What is your plan of action? Do you want to follow up with a phone call or do you want them to contact you?

Close your letter by stating that you would like to discuss employment opportunities or other information with the individual and that you will call to follow up on your letter. This demonstrates your initiative and follow-through and will help you maintain some control of your efforts.

Other points that can be made in the last paragraph:

- Express your willingness to provide additional information
- State a specific time when you will follow up by phone or email
- Let them know if and when you are going to visit their area
- Thank the person receiving your letter for their time and interest

Most importantly, remember to address the cover letter to a person. If you do not have a name, call the department or human resources to find out to whom your letter should be addressed. As a last resort, address your letter to the personnel manager, hiring manager, or recruiting representative.

- Resumes are only as good as the letter accompanying them. So make sure that you spend some time on your letter and direct it to the appropriate person.
- What you write and how you write it tells potential employers a great deal about your professionalism, competence, and personality.
- In a job search aimed at business and professional circles, proper procedures and communication etiquette are important.
- A cover letter should entice an employer to want to take action on your resume. It should persuade the employer to invite you for a job interview.

COVER LETTER FORMAT

Your Address
 City, State, ZIP
 Phone
 E-mail

Date

Name of Contact Person
 Title
 Organization
 Street Address
 City, State ZIP

Dear (Contact Person's Name):

Opening Paragraph: Why you are writing.

- State why you are writing. Name the position or type of position for which you are applying.
- Mention how you learned of the position.
- Mention the name of any referring person.
- Briefly describe why you are interested in this particular position.

Body of the Letter: Sell yourself.

- Introduce yourself.
- Briefly describe the skills and/or experiences you possess that fit the requirements of the position.
- If you have related experiences, mention your qualifications and achievements.
- This is your chance to give the reader more insight as to who you are as a person. Do not repeat your resume. This is the time to mention personal qualities or special experiences and motivators.
- Refer the reader to your enclosed resume.

Closing Paragraph: Request an interview.

- Directly, but politely, indicate your desire to further discuss your qualifications in an interview.
- Make it easy for the reader to contact you by providing your phone number(s), email, and the best time to reach you.
- Thank the contact person for his or her time and consideration.

Sincerely,
 Your Signature
 (4 spaces)

Your typed name
 (2 spaces)
 Enc(s).

TYPES OF COVER LETTERS

SAMPLE #1 - Letter of Application in Response to a Job Listing (This letter accompanies a completed application form or may be used to respond to a specific job listing that requests a letter and resume, and possibly other documentation.)

P.O. Box 000033
Stanford, CA 94000
October 19, 20XX

Ms. Marian Armstone
Human Resources Manager
LEK Consulting
9999 Oak Street
Palo Alto, CA 9003

Dear Ms. Armstone:

This letter and the attached resume serve as my application for the Associate position at LEK Consulting. After speaking with Jo Kimmer at Stanford's Career Fair on October 9, I believe my skills, academic training, and work experience are a good fit for this position.

I will complete a Master of Science degree in Mechanical Engineering in June 20XX. I have developed strong analytical and quantitative skills through coursework in technical, computer science, and economics courses. In addition, my hands-on experience in various internships and student leadership positions supports my qualifications as an Associate.

As an intern at General Motors this past summer, I developed analytical skills by taking measurements on a development vehicle identifying design problems, offering solutions for improvement, and making recommendations in a written report. I was awarded a General Motors scholarship for my exceptional contributions as a member of the S-10 Crew Cab launch team.

At Stanford, I demonstrated leadership ability by serving as the elected president for a service organization with over one hundred active members. In this effort, I honed my ability to make good decisions, plan and organize my time, work well on a team, and have developed sound interpersonal, oral, and written communications skills. Finally, I bring an entrepreneurial spirit and creativity to this position, as evidenced by my experience designing, patenting, and marketing my own product.

I would enjoy speaking with you further to discuss, in detail, how I am a match for the Associate position. I will follow up in two weeks to see if there is additional information you would like me to provide or answer questions you may have (another option: I am eager to apply my energy, experience, and enthusiasm to the work of LEK and look forward to hearing from you soon.).

Sincerely,

John Duncan

John Duncan

SAMPLE #5 - Unsolicited or Broadcast Letter (Mailing unsolicited letters is another way to tap into the hidden job market. While the "letter campaign" is not the most effective strategy for every job seeker, unsolicited letters may work well for applicants with unique expertise in a given area or special technical skills, or for those who wish to work for small organizations in a specific capacity.)

P.O. Box 22445
Stanford, CA 94309

August 7, 20XX

Dr. John Allen, Associate Director
INT Consulting Company
12396 Park Blvd.
Los Angeles, CA 93032

Dear Dr. Allen:

I am currently a student at Stanford University pursuing a BA degree in economics. I am very interested in business-related careers and am seeking opportunities to develop and utilize my skills and qualifications. I have researched your company and believe that your commitment to excellence and service is in alignment with my career goals and beliefs.

In addition to economics, my academic training includes extensive coursework in the sciences where I've developed very strong analytical, quantitative, and technical skills. My research has honed the writing, planning, and organization, and presentation skills that I believe are essential in a business environment.

As an Investment Banker Summer Intern at Morgan Stanley, I collaborated with brokers to market online investing, consulted with prospective clients and networked through the Internet and other computer software. As my resume indicates, I have demonstrated strong leadership and decision-making skills through active participation in campus organizations. In my effort to continue to develop these important skills, I will serve as a Head Academic Advisor this coming year, teaming with resident assistants and faculty members to plan educational and social programs for freshmen to help them plan their academics and adjust to campus life.

I am excited about the many facets of the business world and welcome the opportunity to discuss opportunities to explore in your company. I will follow up in a week to answer questions you may have or provide additional information. In the meantime, should you have questions, I can be reached at 650-600-0000 or email: mjohnson@stanford.edu.

Thank you for your time and I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Sincerely,

Maria Johnson

Maria Johnson

SAMPLE COVER LETTER

123 Anywhere Street
Pullman, WA 99163
509-123-4567
stillnschool.wsu.edu

February 18, 200X

Dr. Mark Green
Owner
Reno Lights Clinic
1234 Casino Road
Reno, NV 99999

Dear Dr. Green:

My name is Still N. School and I am currently a third year student at Washington State University College of Nursing. Before beginning senior clinical practicum in August, I am interested in returning to a clinical setting and would like the opportunity to visit your practice and discuss the possibility of either summer employment or a senior internship.

I am a well-rounded student, recognized on the Dean's List and active in many extracurricular activities and clubs. Throughout nursing school, I have experienced many opportunities that foster teamwork, leadership, diagnostic skills, and problem solving. My studies have included courses such as pharmacology, pathophysiology, anatomy and physiology, psychiatric and mental health, chronic illness in adults, and laboratory values and analysis. In addition to my curriculum, I developed and implemented a thesis project on the positive effect of exercise on insulin levels in severe diabetics. At the end of the project, I presented the successful results at the state nursing convention in Seattle, WA and to the College of Nursing at Washington State University.

My past clinical experience includes two multi-doctor practices in which I fulfilled certified nursing technician duties. Beyond medical knowledge, I gained a great appreciation for a sound staff, teamwork, and respect in the work place. These experiences have shaped my work ethic and my definition of a successful practice. I also have a wide variety of experience working with obese and diabetic populations. My future career interests reflect my diverse background.

I will be in Reno during the third week of March and would like the chance to introduce myself in person and visit your practice. I can be reached at your convenience at the contact information listed below. I will follow up with a phone call during the first week in March. Thank you for taking the time to look over my resume. I look forward to hearing from you soon and meeting with you in March.

Sincerely,

Still N. School

Still N. School

Enc. Resume

KEY PHRASES FOR POWERFUL RESUME & COVER LETTER WRITING

- Excellent written and verbal communication skills.
- First-hand experience with a wide range of cultures.
- Long-term interest in _____.
- Managed a very successful _____.
- Completed assignments to our clients' complete satisfaction.
- Well-organized and resourceful.
- A creative flair for putting on events.
- Excellent communicator; able to draw people out and quickly put them at ease.
- Strong credentials in _____ and _____.
- Creative problem solver.
- Possess a positive, professional image suitable for any business environment.
- Theoretical grounding in _____ and _____.
- A quick learner with ability to adapt to new challenges.
- Designed and implemented a highly successful employee _____.
- Skilled at developing rapport with all types of people.
- Able to resolve conflicts in a diplomatic manner.
- Effective in working with people from _____.
- Outstanding communication and presentation skills.
- I've had specialized courses in _____ and _____.
- Thrive on working with people and helping clients achieve their objectives.
- Effective independently or as a member of the team.
- Diplomatic and tactful with both professionals and nonprofessionals.
- Highly motivated and goal oriented.
- Well-versed in _____. A generator of creative ideas.
- Excellent references from _____.
- Effectively interfaced with management at all levels.
- High level of professionalism.
- Trained by one of the area's most reputable _____.
- Succeeded in only _____ months to educate myself in _____ areas.
- Project a highly competent and professional image.
- A finely tuned sense of _____ and its uses.
- Excellent organization, communication, and writing skills.
- Familiar with _____ cultures and politics.
- Designed courses to train over _____ people.
- Excellent command of both _____ and _____ languages.
- Able to pinpoint problems and initiate creative solutions.
- Poised and competent as a professional representative.
- Extensive public service in nonprofit organizations.
- Special talent for improving systems. Able to accurately establish priorities.
- Enthusiastic, creative, and willing to assume increased responsibility.
- Effective at public speaking and media presentations.
- Ability to organize many documents into a coherent presentation.
- Effective in developing programs which reach goals.
- Communicate well with a wide range of personalities.
- Extremely dependable in completing projects.
- Special talent for coordination of colors and visual effects.
- Planned, managed and supervised events for up to _____ people.
- High energy coupled with enthusiasm and dedication to _____.

SAMPLE ACTION VERBS LISTED BY FUNCTIONAL SKILL AREA

COMMUNICATION

Aided
Advised
Arbitrated
Clarified
Co-authored
Collaborated
Consulted
Coordinated
Counseled
Defined
Enlisted
Formulated
Influenced
Informed
Inspired
Interpreted
Interviewed
Mediated
Merged
Negotiated
Promoted
Publicized
Recommended
Represented
Resolved
Suggested

CREATIVE

Acted
Abstracted
Adapted
Composed
Conceptualized
Created
Designed
Developed
Directed
Drew
Fashioned
Generated
Illustrated
Imagined
Improvised
Integrated
Innovated
Painted

Performed
Planned
Problem solved
Shaped
Synthesized
Visualized
Wrote

DETAIL ORIENTED

Analyzed
Approved
Arranged
Classified
Collated
Compared
Compiled
Documented
Enforced
Followed through
Met deadlines
Prepared
Processed
Recorded
Retrieved
Set priorities
Systemized
Tabulated

FINANCIAL

Administered
Allocated
Analyzed
Appraised
Audited
Budgeted
Calculated
Computed
Developed
Evaluated
Figured
Maintained
Managed
Performed
Planned
Projected

MANUAL SKILLS

Arranged
Assembled
Bound
Built
Checked
Classified
Constructed
Controlled
Cut
Designed
Developed
Drove
Handled
Installed
Invented
Maintained
Monitored
Prepared
Operated
Repaired
Tested

PROVIDING SERVICE

Advised
Attended
Cared
Coached
Coordinated
Counseled
Delivered
Demonstrated
Explained
Furnished
Generated
Inspected
Installed
Issued
Mentored
Provided
Purchased
Referred
Repaired
Submitted

ORGANIZING

Achieved
Assigned
Consulted
Contracted
Controlled
Coordinated
Decided
Delegated
Developed
Established
Evaluated
Negotiated
Organized
Planned
Prepared
Prioritized
Produced
Recommended
Reported

LEADERSHIP

Administered
Chaired
Convinced
Directed
Examined
Executed
Expanded
Facilitated
Improved
Initiated
Managed
Oversaw
Produced
Recommended
Reviewed
Supervised

RESEARCH/ INVESTIGATION

Calculated
Cataloged
Collected
Computed
Conducted
Correlated
Critiqued
Diagnosed

Discovered
Evaluated
Examined
Experimented
Extrapolated
Gathered
Identified
Inspected
Investigated
Monitored
Proved
Reviewed
Surveyed
Tested

TECHNICAL

Assembled
Built
Calculated
Computed
Designed
Engineered
Fabricated
Maintained
Operated
Programmed
Remodeled
Repaired
Solved

TEACHING SKILLS

Adapted
Advised
Clarified
Coached
Developed
Encouraged
Evaluated
Informed
Inspired
Motivated
Participated
Provided
Represented
Supported
Taught
Trained
Verified

ACTION WORDS

Accepted	Compiled	Enforced	Inventoried	Recruited
Accounted	Composed	Engineered	Investigated	Rectified
Achieved	Computed	Enlarged	Issued	Reduced
Acquired	Conceptualized	Enlisted	Itemized	Refined
Adapted	Condensed	Entered	Joined	Reinforced
Addressed	Conducted	Established	Launched	Reorganized
Adjusted	Consolidated	Estimated	Led	Repaired
Administered	Constructed	Evaluated	Maintained	Reported
Adopted	Consulted	Examined	Managed	Represented
Advised	Contracted	Executed	Manufactured	Researched
Advocated	Converted	Exhibited	Marketed	Resolved
Allocated	Conveyed	Expanded	Measured	Retrieved
Allotted	Coordinated	Experienced	Mediated	Reviewed
Altered	Copied	Experimented	Minimized	Revised
Analyzed	Corrected	Explained	Modified	Scheduled
Answered	Correlated	Extracted	Monitored	Selected
Anticipated	Counseled	Fabricated	Motivated	Separated
Applied	Created	Facilitated	Negotiated	Set up
Appointed	Critiqued	Filed	Notified	Shaped
Appraised	Cultivated	Financed	Observed	Simplified
Approved	Defined	Forecasted	Obtained	Solved
Arbitrated	Delegated	Formed	Operated	Sparked
Arranged	Delivered	Formulated	Ordered	Surveyed
Assembled	Demonstrated	Founded	Originated	Staffed
Assessed	Described	Gathered	Organized	Strengthened
Assigned	Designated	Generated	Outlined	Studied
Assisted	Designed	Governed	Overcame	Succeeded
Audited	Detailed	Graded	Oversaw	Summarized
Authorized	Detected	Grouped	Participated	Supervised
Awarded	Determined	Guided	Performed	Surveyed
Balanced	Developed	Handled	Persuaded	Synthesized
Budgeted	Devised	Headed	Planned	Tailored
Calculated	Diagnosed	Hired	Predicted	Taught
Calibrated	Directed	Identified	Prepared	Tested
Carried	Disciplined	Illustrated	Presented	Trained
Catalogued	Discovered	Imagined	Presided	Transcribed
Categorized	Dispatched	Implemented	Prevented	Transformed
Certified	Dispensed	Improved	Prioritized	Translated
Checked	Displayed	Improvised	Produced	Tutored
Centralized	Dissected	Increased	Programmed	Typed
Changed	Disseminated	Informed	Promoted	Unified
Clarified	Distributed	Initiated	Protected	Updated
Classified	Drafted	Innovated	Proposed	Utilized
Cleaned	Drafted	Inspected	Provided	Verified
Coached	Edited	Installed	Publicized	Wrote
Collaborated	Elected	Instructed	Published	
Collated	Eliminated	Insured	Recognized	
Collected	Empowered	Integrated	Recommended	
Communicated	Encouraged	Interpreted	Reconciled	
Compared	Endorsed	Interviewed	Recorded	