

Cover Letters

You should always include a cover letter when mailing, e-mailing, or faxing a resume.

- A cover letter serves two basic purposes: as an introduction and as a marketing tool. Your cover letter should describe specific reasons the employer should consider you as a viable candidate for a job opening. Those reasons may include your educational training, your work experience, and/or personal qualities and attributes.
- Address your letter to an identified person, as opposed to "To whom it may concern." (Call the organization and ask to whom your letter should be addressed). If you are responding to a "blind ad" (PO Box only), you may use "To whom it may concern" as the salutation.
- Tailor your letter to the position being filled or to the organization itself. This means that you will have to write a specific letter for each resume you mail. Generic cover letters look like just that (what do you do with mail addressed to "occupant"?) and have a very poor success rate because they are attributed to a lack of genuine interest on your part. You will be able to use essentially the same structure in most of your letters, but personalize each one and emphasize how your training and experience relates to that specific job.
- When printing hard copies, use good quality paper. The paper should match that of your resume. A cover letter should never be handwritten. Keep the cover letter to one page.
- The cover letter conveys a great deal about your writing skills. Use clear, concise language and proofread carefully! The letter should be free of any errors.

COVER LETTER OUTLINE

Your Street Address
City, State, Zip Code
Date

(Space down four spaces)

Ms. Betty Wilson
Director of Recruiting
Jefferson Industries, Inc.
1234 Broad Parkway
Greenville, SC 29602

Dear Ms. Wilson:

The opening paragraph should state why you are writing and why you are interested in the organization. If you are writing a letter of application, you should name the position for which you are applying and tell the employer how you became aware of the position. A letter of inquiry should provide evidence of your career-mindedness; it helps to refer to specific job functions, if not the job title. If you were referred to the employer by another person, this is the best place to mention that person's name, and point out that he or she suggested you write.

The middle paragraph is where you highlight specific skills you possess that are relevant to the job or employer. This paragraph should strongly outline your strengths for the position and your motives for seeking employment with this organization. Remember to be concise and give specific examples of your skills. If you have qualifications noted on your resume, this is the opportunity to discuss how they relate to this particular position or employer, but do not just repeat information that is on your resume.

The closing paragraph states what you will do next (such as calling to arrange an interview at the employer's convenience), or what you would like the recipient of the letter to do next. An assertive statement explaining what you plan to do and what you hope the employer will do is harder to ignore than a vague request for consideration. Also, here is where you thank the employer for considering you for this position.

Sincerely,

(Space down four spaces and sign your name here)

Your Name Typed

Enclosure (This indicates that your resume is enclosed)

SAMPLE COVER LETTER

18 Central Street
Charleston, SC 29402
March 20, 2005

Mr. John Dow
Editor
The Upstate Magazine
2448 Oak Street
Spartanburg, SC 29093

Dear Mr. Dow:

I am writing to express my interest in the Assistant Copy Editor position advertised through the College of Charleston Career Center. My previous work experience, educational background, and strong writing, organizational and research skills make me an ideal candidate for this role. Your magazine has an excellent reputation for award-winning design and creativity, and my skills, abilities, and desire to excel will make me an asset to this stellar publication.

In May, I will receive a Bachelor of Arts in English from the College of Charleston. My coursework emphasized the critical elements of writing for the mass media, as well as the fundamentals of proper grammar and composition. In addition, I recently completed an internship with Lowcountry Living Magazine, where I edited and proofread articles and features on a variety of topics. Working in this position afforded me the opportunity to participate in the layout and design of the magazine, which enhanced my knowledge of various computer programs used in the publishing industry, such as QuarkXPress and PageMaker. Furthermore, my experience includes working for a large Charleston law firm, where I created a wide variety of documents that were both easy to read and error-free.

Visiting Spartanburg for a personal interview would be a welcomed opportunity to learn more about The Upstate Magazine. I would appreciate the opportunity to discuss with you how my capabilities and personal qualities may be of benefit to your organization.

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

Sincerely,

Danielle McKay

Enclosure

SAMPLE THANK-YOU LETTER

18 Rutledge Street
Charleston, SC 29402
April 3, 2005

Alice Kimsey
Editor in Chief
Charleston Newspaper
1 Company Drive
Anywhere, SC 12097

Dear Ms. Kimsey:

Thank you so much for the opportunity to interview for the Charleston Newspaper Editorial Intern. I am excited about the opportunity to join your team, and my interest grew after meeting with you yesterday.

My previous experience working at the on-campus newspaper, The George Street Observer, will be very beneficial to your organization. I understand the processes that a paper of your caliber must go through in order to provide the public with a true representation of the news.

Again, thank you and I look forward to hearing from you soon regarding the Editorial Intern position.

Sincerely,

Aaron Todd

SAMPLE COVER LETTER

12 Cougar Lane
Charleston, SC 29407

May 5, 2009

Mr. Kendall Smith
All for Democracy Organization
1 Columbia Avenue
North Charleston, SC 55565

Dear Mr. Smith:

I am writing to express my interest in a summer internship with All for Democracy Organization. Currently, I am a sophomore at College of Charleston double majoring in Political Science and Business Administration. I would very much appreciate an opportunity to further my skills and knowledge in the non-profit sector. All for Democracy Organization has an excellent reputation for its work in promoting the voting process, and I am confident that my academic background, combined with my personal experience, will be beneficial to your work environment.

As a member of the Student Government Association (SGA) at the College of Charleston, I gained valuable experience working with people from diverse backgrounds. The SGA has also given me the opportunity to work in a political body on a small scale, learning the different processes in a government setting. These experiences will undoubtedly help me work well with your organization in promoting the voting process. In addition, my involvement with many extracurricular groups while maintaining high grades, has provided me with the confidence that I can handle multiple responsibilities and successfully meet deadlines.

My background and experience, combined with my eagerness to learn more about the non-profit sector, make me well-suited for an internship with your organization. I would greatly appreciate the opportunity to meet you in person to discuss internship opportunities. Please feel free to call me at 555.555.1234 or email me at student@email.com.

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

Sincerely,

Dawn Donaldson
Enclosures

SAMPLE COVER LETTER

1 Peachtree Avenue
Atlanta, GA 30051

July 15, 2008

Reference: Junior Publicist Position, CNN Public Relations

It is with tremendous enthusiasm and confidence that I am writing you in reference to the Junior Publicist Position with CNN Public Relations that you posted with the College of Charleston Career Center. I was pleased to learn about the digital and interactive publicity efforts that your company has taken on in the past few years. I have always admired the way CNN is constantly innovating and redefining traditional media outlets to reflect the ever-changing nature of the news media itself. In May 2008, I will graduate from the College of Charleston with Bachelor's degrees in both Corporate Communications and Spanish.

The atmosphere within the public relations department of CNN appears to be one characterized by resourceful pitching and strategic implementation to which I can contribute. Your need for excellent written and verbal communication skills is a great match to the talent I gained through my constant professional communication with various media groups while serving as Public Relations Intern for the South Carolina Aquarium. My position as Public Relations Executive of College of Charleston's first annual Dance Marathon fundraiser proved my ability to generate substantial media coverage for a brand new effort while building solid foundations for successful publicity of the event in the future.

I truly believe that a Junior Publicist position with CNN would be the perfect opportunity for me to invest my skills in a company for which I have incredible respect. Should you have any questions about my experience or qualifications, please do not hesitate to contact me at (555) 123-7896 or at alumni@college.edu. I appreciate your time in considering me for this position and look forward to hearing from you soon.

Sincerely,

Jessica Krasny

Note: Jessica did not know who she should address her cover letter to so she used a reference line which includes the position title.

E-mail Cover Letters

Your e-mail cover letter will follow the same protocol as the print version. When e-mailing a potential employer the e-mail is your cover letter, you do not have to attach a separate document. Here are more e-mail specific tips for writing your electronic cover letter:

- Do NOT waste your subject line of the e-mail. Never leave it blank. The purpose of this line is to attract the reader and tempt them to open your message. For example, reference the position title in the subject line.
- In the cover letter, make sure that you indicate if your resume is attached or if it can be seen below the cover letter. Remember that employers will be wary of opening attachments, so including a plain-text version of your resume after your cover letter is usually a good idea.
- When formatting your e-mail cover letter, use left justification for your margins. Avoid indents and place a space between each paragraph. Avoid using emoticons, abbreviations, wild colors, and other distracting and unprofessional items. Many e-mail systems cannot handle text enhancements like bolding, bulleting, or underlining, so play it safe by using spaces and dashes -- if you feel emphasis is needed.
- Be concise. Remember that reading e-mail on the screen is often harder than reading printed communications.
- Don't forget to check your cover letter for spelling errors, style, and content before pressing the "send" button.

SAMPLE E-MAIL COVER LETTER

Subject: Editorial Assistant Position at Cougar House Publishing

Dear Ms. Wolden,

I am writing to express my interest in the Editorial Assistant position posted on your web site the week of November 18. I will graduate from the College of Charleston with a degree in English in the spring, and I would love to begin my publishing career with Cougar House Publishing. The quality of the books which your organization produces is superb and stands out in the industry.

Through my work at The George Street Observer, the College of Charleston student newspaper, I experienced the publishing process first hand. As an editor, I evaluate and select submissions, give feedback to authors (including those whose work is rejected), help authors polish their work, and assist with layout and proofreading. Through office and research assistant positions, I've developed the outstanding clerical and organizational skills necessary for the job of Editorial Assistant, and I believe my combined skills are an excellent fit with the position's requirements.

I would welcome the opportunity to visit Cougar House Publishing and speak with you about the Editorial Assistant position. Thank you for your time and interest, and if you have any questions please do not hesitate to contact me at 555.123.4567 or by email at student@college.com. I have attached my resume as a PDF document. Please let me know if you would prefer it in another format.

Regards,
Becky S. Denton