

COVER LETTERS

What is a cover letter?

Also known as a letter of application or inquiry, cover letters should accompany your resume/application for a specific position OR your inquiry into possible openings. An effective cover letter highlights and expands on important elements of your resume — skills, experience, education, personality — which relates to the position for which you are applying. Not only does a cover letter tell of your accomplishments, it also reveals how effectively you can communicate. The goal is to convince the employer to interview you.



Five Points in writing an effective cover letter.

- ◆ **Address the letter to a specific person.** If you do not have a name, call the organization and ask for the name & title of the person who should receive your letter. Also make sure to ask for the correct spelling. (Nothing is more off-putting to read a letter in which your name is misspelled). If all else fails, “Dear Sir/Madam” or “To Whom it May Concern” is appropriate. *But make no mistake about it — a letter addressed to an individual **by name** is taken more seriously.*
- ◆ **Stick to one page** or less. Make sure it is typed and use the same high-quality paper that you utilized for your resume. Heads up! There should also be NO spelling or grammar errors. Proof-read carefully! Have a staff member in Career Services review your cover letter with you.
- ◆ **Research the organization** to ensure that your cover letter is individualized and targeted to that company’s specific position. By taking time to learn more about their company, it demonstrates to the employer that you are serious about their organization and are not merely sending out a form letter.
- ◆ **Use action verbs** (see *Resume handout for examples*) to convey confidence.
- ◆ **Do NOT repeat the contents of your resume verbatim.** Instead demonstrate *how* you possess a certain skill(s) on your resume by highlighting a specific experience or achievement. For example:

OK: “I have a bachelor degree in finance and two years of experience as a summer teller at the Maryland National Bank.”

Better: “My finance degree has given me broad insight into the issues surrounding commercial loans. As a teller at Maryland National Bank, I assisted a variety of customers in a highly professional manner, thus demonstrating the importance that the bank places on customer service.”



Other letters of correspondence

◀ **Thank-you Letter** (*Follow-up after an interview*)

Letter to thank employer for a job interview. Reaffirms your interest in the position and the organization.

◀ **Letter of Acceptance**

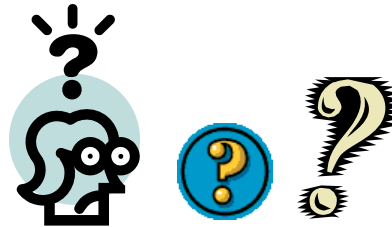
Letter indicating that you are pleased to accept a job offer. The terms of employment (starting date, responsibilities, salary, etc.) are re-stated.

◀ **Letter of Refusal**

Letter indicating that you are pleased with a job offer, but that you have decided not to accept the position & a reason why (ex: you have accepted another position; the position does not meet your career goals at this time, etc.). In closing, thank the employer for the time and consideration given to you.

◀ **Thank-you Letter** (*Follow-up after assistance from a networking contact*)

Letters sent to individuals who have referred you to employers or provided helpful job search information.



Why send a Thank-you Letter?

An often forgotten but important step, a thank-you letter is an essential follow-up to a phone or face-to-face interview. Not only does it reaffirm your interest in a specific position and the organization, it gives you the chance to address any concerns raised during the interview. If you did not have the chance to discuss an area of expertise which demonstrates your strength as a candidate, your thank-you letter gives you an appropriate place to do so. It is okay to fax or e-mail your letter if you know that the hiring time line is drawing to a close.

***Take Note:** Send your thank-you letter as soon as possible after the interview (within 24-48 hours is ideal).



Let a Career Services staff member assist you! Call the number below to make an appointment or stop by our office. Can't get on our calendar? E-mail your cover letter draft to careers@cua.edu & a staff member will review it. Please allow a 48-hour turnaround period.

COVER LETTER FORMAT

Your Street Address
City, State, Zip
Date

Name of Person
Title
Organization
Street Address
City, State, Zip

Dear Mr./Ms./Dr./Rev./Sr. _____:

INTRODUCTION: (Who you are and why you are writing)

- Mention the specific position for which you wish to be considered...or the type of position about which you would like to inquire.
- Tell the reader how you learned of the position/organization - through a mutual acquaintance, an advertisement, as a result of your research, etc.
- Include your degree, major and graduation date and/or years of relevant work experience, appropriate for the job.
- Introduce the reason(s) you are interested in the position/organization - you will explain them in the body of the letter.

BODY: (Why you are applying and why you are qualified)

- Promote your credentials to the employer. Show how your background matches the position by highlighting areas of your resume that are particularly relevant.
- Describe any special qualities or skills you have developed through jobs, course work and activities - demonstrate how they can be useful in the position/organization.
- State your reasons for wanting to work for this organization. Let the employer know how the position fits in with your career goals.

CLOSING: (Requesting an interview and offering to facilitate process)

- Request an interview in a straightforward and positive manner. If you will be in the employer's area at a certain time, suggest when an interview could be arranged.
- Offer to provide additional information to support your candidacy - reference letters, transcript, writing sample, portfolio, etc.
- Provide information that will assist the organization in contacting you...or indicate when you will contact them to check on your application.
- Show appreciation for the time the employer spent with your letter and that you look forward to further contact.

Sincerely,

Signature (Do not forget to sign your name!)

Your Name

THANK YOU LETTER

Your Address
City, State Zip
Today's Date

Name of Person
Job Title/Department
Organization
Address
City, State Zip

Dear Mr./Ms. Employer:

Thank person for type of interaction that took place (e.g., interview, full day of interviews.) Extend your appreciation to others who may have been involved in the interview process. If necessary or helpful, include date and location of interview (e.g., campus interview, job fair.)

Express value of interview in confirming and/or increasing your interest in the position/organization. Point to specific factor(s) which support your feeling. Summarize why you fit the position. You may wish to mention anything of significance you forgot to bring up in the interview.

Conclude by expressing your looking forward to hearing from the employer and your willingness to supply any additional information that would assist his/her deliberations. If the hiring process includes additional interviews, state your eagerness to participate in the process.

Sincerely,
Your Signature (Do not forget to sign your name!)
Your Name

ACCEPTANCE LETTER

Your Address
City, State Zip
Today's Date

Name of Person
Job Title/Department
Organization
Address
City, State Zip

Dear Mr./Ms. Employer:

Indicate that you are pleased to accept offer of employment as indicated by employer's telephone call or letter. Restate salary, starting date or other important details.

Express that you are looking forward to working with the organization/beginning your training program/etc.

Sincerely,
Your Signature (Do not forget to sign your name!)
Your Name