

JOB SEARCH CORRESPONDENCE GUIDELINES



**Cover Letter
E-Mail Cover Letter
Prospecting Letter**

**Thank You Letter
References
E-Mail vs. Regular Mail**

Johnson County Community College
Career Services Center
SC 252
913.469.3870
www.jccc.edu/careerservices
2009

COVER LETTER

What is a cover letter?

The cover letter introduces you and your resume. It is a marketing tool to sell your candidacy for a job by highlighting aspects of your background that relate to a particular position. A carefully crafted cover letter complements your resume and may provide a brief summary, however the focus is on employer needs. It is necessary to send both a resume and a cover letter each time you contact a potential employer.

What is the purpose of a cover letter?

The purpose of the cover letter is to obtain an interview. It conveys your qualifications for the position, how well you communicate and your interest and enthusiasm in working for the organization. Qualifications that match specific job requirements are emphasized in the cover letter as contrasted to a complete picture of your background that is shown on the resume.

What are the components of a cover letter?

A good cover letter generally includes three paragraphs and meets three criteria.

The criteria:

- Captures the reader's attention
- Sells the potential employee
- Stimulates action (to interview you for the position)

The paragraphs:

- Introductory – mention the position and how you heard about it
- Body – sell your qualifications and interest
- Closing – take initiative to follow up and invite to contact you

The body of the letter is the most important section as it gives the employer reasons why they should consider you for an interview! It should include an overview of your strengths and qualifications as they relate to the targeted position. Include examples of your accomplishments if possible. These can be bulleted for increased emphasis. For example:

I am very interested in the Office Manager position as my experience and career goals correlate directly with your requirements. Specifically, my background includes:

- *Five years experience managing satellite offices with six employees*
- *Computer and office administration skills*
- *Exceptional organization and communication skills*

Cardinal Rules, Important Info and a Cover Letter sample follow...

COVER LETTER (continued)

Cardinal Rules on Content

- Research the company and learn as much as you can about the position. (You can often check the organization's website to gain good information.)
- Target the letter to the specific position and organization.
- Write from the employers' perspective and focus on employer needs.
- Address the cover letter to a specific individual within the organization. (Example: Mr. John Brown, Manager)
- Keep your salary options open. If it is absolutely required (meaning that your resume will not be accepted without mentioning your salary history or requirements), provide a *range* if possible.
- A "P.S." can be very effective and it may be handwritten.

Font

- Times New Roman, Arial or Courier font suggested.
- Use 10 or 12-point font.
- Sign the letter with black or blue ink.

Format

- Use block letter format.
- Margins should be at least 1 inch from top; other three sides a minimum of ½ inch and a maximum of 1.25 inches.
- You may follow the name and address with a reference to the position. (Example: Subject: Marketing Assistant position)
- Single space paragraphs; double space between each paragraph.

Check letter for errors

- Proofread your letter before you send it.
- Have at least two others proofread it as well.
- There should be NO errors of any kind.

Submitting/Sending the Letter and Resume

- Mail in a 9 x 12 envelope or tri-fold in a business-sized envelope. Be sure to include your resume.
- Do not staple or paper clip the cover letter to the resume.

Follow Up

- Keep a copy of the cover letter and follow up as stated in the letter.

COVER LETTER EXAMPLE

JILL ARMSTRONG =====

12345 College Boulevard, Overland Park, KS 66210 ♦ (913) 555-5555 ♦ ajill@notmail.com

June 1, 2003

Mr./Ms./Mrs./Dr. First and Last Name

Position Title

Company Name

Address, Suite

City, State, Zip Code

Subject: **Marketing Assistant** position (Note: The subject line is optional)

Dear Mr./Ms./Mrs./Dr. Last Name:

I am interested in applying for the **Marketing Assistant** position that was recently advertised in the Kansas City Star. This position correlates very closely with my training and experience as an intern at Planter and Alwaysgreen, where I worked in a team environment to develop a greenhouse advertising campaign.

Enclosed is my resume. I earned a degree in Marketing and Management, which prepared me to handle a variety of responsibilities in the marketing field, and I received an award for a promotion brochure created for a class project. I can contribute energy and ideas to a marketing team and I possess excellent communication skills.

I would welcome the opportunity to interview with you and further discuss my qualifications. I will contact you next week to determine if a meeting will be possible. If you need additional information, please contact me at (913) 123-4567. Thank you for your consideration. I look forward to speaking with you.

Sincerely,

Signature

Type your First and Last Name

Enclosure: Resume

E-MAIL COVER LETTER

An e-mail cover letter is becoming the preferred expeditious way to contact employers during the job search process. The purpose of the e-mail is to identify the job, highlight your qualifications and strengths, and invite the reader to view your attached resume. This process could help or hinder you if you don't follow a few simple tips.

- *Keep it short.* Because e-mail is supposed to be an efficient means of communicating, don't get too lengthy or wordy. It should be direct and to the point.
- *Do include a formal salutation and closing* similar to the traditional cover letter.
- *Highlight your competencies and interests only,* giving just enough information to make it worthwhile for the employer to open your attached resume.
- *Tailor your message to the employer's needs.* Knowing what the employer is looking for and being able to parallel that into your e-mail cover letter is essential.
- *Make your subject line capture the attention of the reader* by being very specific, for example ... Jill Armstrong, Web Design Intern Position, #12345.
- *Use spell check and proofread your correspondence.* Remember human resource generalists, not machines, will be reading your letter. Sending a test run to a friend to check that attachments open, and the tabs and margins stay the same, is highly recommended to ensure a good first impression.
- *Type "Resume attached" or "Resume follows" after the salutation* (depending on how the employer prefers to receive resume).

E-MAIL COVER LETTER EXAMPLE

Jill Armstrong

To: kjohnson@xyzcorp.com
Subject: Jill Armstrong, Web Design Intern Position, #12345

Dear Ms. Johnson:

Yesterday my advisor at Johnson County Community College, Joe Miller, suggested I contact you about the summer intern position in web design.

At Johnson County Community College, I have taken courses that have given me an excellent understanding of both the design aspect and the marketing functions that determine a good website. Additionally, several of my course projects involved working with startup web-based businesses, analyzing the strengths and weaknesses of their business models.

You will see from my web page profile at <http://www.ajill.com/> that my design skills complement those of your company's website, allowing me to contribute almost immediately. I would welcome the opportunity to interview with you and further discuss my qualifications. I will contact you next week to determine if a meeting will be possible. Thank you for your consideration. I look forward to speaking with you.

Sincerely,

Jill Armstrong

Resume attached

PROSPECTING LETTER

APPLICANT'S NAME _____

Applicant's Address • City, State Zip Code • Phone Number • E-Mail Address

(Personal letterhead as it appears on Resume)

Date

Employer's name

Employer's title

Company name

Address

City, State Zip Code

Salutation (Dear Mr./Ms.,)

Introduction paragraph

Because this letter is being sent to an organization that has not announced specific job openings, you need to get the attention of the employer by showing how your strongest work skills could benefit the organization.

Body paragraph

Give supporting evidence of the top selling points you listed in the introduction paragraph. Show how your studies and work experience have prepared you for the job area. Highlight your personal qualities that may correlate to needs of the company.

Closing paragraph

Ask for an opportunity to interview. Provide follow-up information as well as how the company can contact you (phone, e-mail, pager, etc.).

Sincerely,

Sign your Name

Type your name

Enclosure: Resume

PROSPECTING LETTER EXAMPLE

JILL ARMSTRONG

12345 College Blvd. • Overland Park, KS 66210 • 913.469.8500 • ajill@notmail.com

January 31, 2003

Ms. Carol Patrick
General Manager
Wal-Mart
13555 Santa Fe Drive
Olathe, KS 66062

Dear Ms. Patrick:

Do you want retail clerks and managers who are accurate, enthusiastic, and experienced? Additionally, do you want someone who cares about customer service, who understands merchandising, and who can work well with others to get the job done? When you are ready to hire a manager trainee or a clerk who is willing to work toward promotion, please consider me for the job.

Working as a clerk and then as an assistant department manager in a large department store has taught me how challenging a career in retailing can be. My Associates of Arts degree in retail will provide your store with a well-rounded potential employee. I can offer Wal-Mart's Olathe store more than my two years of study and field experience. You will find that I am interested in every facet of retailing and eager to take on responsibility. Please review my resume to see how my skills can benefit your store.

I understand that Wal-Mart prefers to promote its managers from within the company, and I would be pleased to start out with an entry-level position until I gain the necessary experience. Do you have any associate positions opening up soon? Would it be possible to discuss my qualifications in more detail? I can be reached at 913.469.8500. Otherwise, I will phone you early next week to arrange a meeting at your convenience.

Sincerely,

Jill Armstrong

Jill Armstrong

Enclosure: Resume

THANK YOU LETTER

Do I need to write one?

Yes! It is very important to write a thank you letter following an interview as a sign of professional courtesy and to remind the reader about your candidacy.

When should I send it?

Write the letter within 48 hours after your interview. The organization may be making a quick decision and you want to be sure they remember you and your qualifications. To really impress them, follow up with a phone call a week after you send the letter. You can explain that you want to be sure your letter was received. This continues to keep your name in front of the interviewer. You could also ask an insightful question about the job or comment on a significant business development that affects the organization to show your interest.

What are the components of a thank you letter?

The letter should be short and conversational. There are three important factors to include and three paragraphs are probably sufficient. Send a personalized letter to each individual involved in the interview process.

The Opening: Mention the date of the interview and express your appreciation for the opportunity to meet with them.

The Body: Summarize your strongest selling points and reinforce your understanding of the position requirements. Include any important information that you may have omitted during the interview.

The Closing: Emphasize your interest in the position and the organization.

Can I send a thank you letter on e-mail?

Yes, you may. However, a letter on high-quality paper makes a better impression. To send via e-mail, follow the above guidelines and keep it brief.

Sample of a thank you letter follows...

THANK YOU LETTER EXAMPLE

JILL ARMSTRONG

12345 College Boulevard, Overland Park, KS 66210 ♦ (913) 555-5555 ♦ ajill@notmail.com

June 15, 2003

Mr./Ms./Mrs./Dr. First and Last Name

Position title

Company Name

Address, Suite number

City, State/Zip Code

Dear Mr./Ms./Mrs./Dr. Last Name:

Thank you for meeting with me on Wednesday, June 14, to discuss the **Marketing Assistant** position. I enjoyed learning more about your organization and the projects being accomplished in the Marketing Department.

As you will recall from our interview, I have experience working as an intern in a team environment where I was instrumental in the development of a successful marketing plan. I enjoy the challenges of this career field and my marketing degree program prepared me to analyze consumer trends and develop responsive strategies.

I am excited about the opportunity to work for the XYZ Corporation and look forward to hearing from you again.

Sincerely,

Signature

Type your First and Last Name

REFERENCE PAGE

JILL ARMSTRONG

12345 College Blvd. • Overland Park, KS 66210 • 913.469.8500 • jill@notmail.com

REFERENCES

Name

Title

Company Name

Company Address

Phone Number

E-Mail Address

Name

Title

Company Name

Company Address

Phone Number

E-Mail Address

Name

Title

Company Name

Company Address

Phone Number

E-Mail Address

Note:

- Ask permission from your references and alert them when applying for jobs.
- Provide a copy of your resume to your references to refresh their memories of your capabilities and skills.
- Provide a copy of the job description or advertisement to your references; this will allow them to correlate your capabilities and skills to the position.

E-MAIL VS. REGULAR MAIL

The medium you choose must be a good fit for the intended reader. Use **E-MAIL** when:

- *Speed is very important.* Without a doubt, e-mail is your best choice when you need to communicate immediately. Even a few hours or a couple of days can be too long in many fast-moving hiring environments.
- *You need to demonstrate technology skills.* If you are a mature candidate, your e-mail correspondence can show that you are up-to-date on technology.
- *You're contacting a high-tech company.* Even if you're not a technical professional, if everyone at the company communicates by e-mail, you should follow suit.
- *You're communicating with recruiters.* E-mail is the preferred method of communication for executive recruiters. Sending resumes and supporting documents make their job easier.

Use **REGULAR MAIL** when:

- *Sending thank-you letters.* A well-formatted letter on high-quality bond paper makes a better impression than an e-mail note. You can write a longer letter if needed to re-emphasize relevant points. Only use e-mail if you know the hiring decision will be made very quickly after the interview.
- *You are a senior executive.* Except those in high-tech fields, traditional mailed correspondence is still the recommended approach for executives. You can be more detailed and present a more professional image.

JOB SEARCH CORRESPONDENCE PACKET RESOURCES

Portions of this information packet were excerpted from, or suggested by, the following resources.

Websites:

www.careerjournal.com

www.usatoday.com

Books and Journals:

101 Best Cover LettersBlock and Betrus
The Ultimate Job Hunter's GuidebookGreene and Martel
Career DevelopmentMonica Breidenbach
The Perfect Cover LetterRichard Beatty
Career EtiquetteMark Satterfield
Basic Business CommunicationLesikar and Flatley
The Smart Woman's Guide to Resumes
and Job HuntingKing and Sheldon
"Writing Cover Letters with Credibility," The Career Planning and Adult
Development Journal, Vol. 17, No. 4, Winter 2001-2002 Nancy Davis