Cover Letters, Thank you Notes, Professional Correspondence

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Correspondence Resources
COVER LETTER

What is a Cover Letter?
Cover letters fill in the essential elements employers want to know, but might not get from the resume alone. Cover letters answer two major questions for employers:
• Are you qualified for the position?
• Are you a good fit for this organization?

How do you answer the questions?
• Every cover letter must be tailored to each specific position for which you apply
• Present your qualifications as they directly relate to the qualifications listed in the job description
• Show how your passions, values, career goals align with the mission, values, and projects of the organization

Why is a Cover Letter so Important?
• Show the employer why you want THIS job at THIS company
• Give the employer a better picture of you as a whole
• Target your experience and skills to the specific position to which you apply, to show what you can offer
• Call attention to skills and talents that make you unique and show why you are a good match for the company
• Explain things that a resume cannot, i.e. gaps in employment, re-entering the job market, changing career focus
• It is a writing sample; proofread and double check for spelling and grammar

Cover Letter Golden Rules
• Never be generic or mass produced
• Only one page, it is clear, concise and to the point
• Get feedback and proofread your letter – it is a testament to your professionalism
• Do not use acronyms, colloquialisms, slang, and complicated jargon
• SPELLCHECK

FORMAT AND CONTENT

Professional letter (APA) style
• Sender’s address
• Date
• Recipient’s address
• Salutation
• Body
• Closing
• Single line spacing
• Be consistent with the space between sections, one or two lines

• Sender’s Address
  • Your current or permanent address
  • Format
    ▪ Address in the upper left corner
    ▪ Heading from your resume

• Date
  • Leave space after your address
  • Remember to change the date when tailoring letter

• Recipient’s Address
  • Leave space after the date
• Full address – including suite, floor, etc.
• Use local address over headquarters
• Triple check spelling

• Salutation
  o Leave space after the recipient’s address
  o ‘Dear’
  o A specific name is preferable
    ▪ Dear Ms. Marymount
  o General greetings
    ▪ Hiring Manager
    ▪ Company Name
    ▪ Write out full name if unsure of gender
  o Use a colon

• Body
  o Written in first person
  o First Paragraph
    ▪ The position you are applying to
    ▪ Where you found the position
      ▪ Marymount University Career Services database
      ▪ Company website
    ▪ Statement as to why you think you are a good candidate – makes the reader want to read on
      ▪ I believe my background in ..... make me a good candidate for this position
      ▪ I have experience in ..... which gives me a unique perspective on this role
  o Second Paragraph
    ▪ Specific examples
    ▪ Match your experiences with the job requirements or qualifications
    ▪ Employment, classroom, volunteer, activity experience can all be used
    ▪ If you performed any of the job duties listed, include those
    ▪ Goal: Show the employer why you are the right candidate for the position
  o Third Paragraph
    ▪ Thank the reader for his/her time
    ▪ Re-state contact information
      ▪ Email and phone
      ▪ Do not use phrases such as ‘contact information found above’
      ▪ Do not give times – “I can be reached on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 10am – 2pm”
      ▪ Do NOT tell the reader you will contact them
    ▪ Thank and again and hope to hear back
  o Additional Paragraph
    ▪ Between second and third paragraphs
    ▪ Explains your interest in the organization or company
      ▪ Tie to company mission and values
      ▪ Reference corporate culture (if you know for a fact, not just what you heard)

• Closing
  o Sincerely, Best Regards, Thank you, Regards
  o Leave space to sign your name, typically 4 spaces
  o Type your full name

SUBMITTING DOCUMENTS
Marymount University Center for Career Services © 2014
Compiled by Lindsay Jenkins
Uploading to an Applicant Tracking System (ATS)

- Most common
- You might lose some of your formatting
  - When possible, paste the document into the text box and attach it
- Title your documents with your name
  - Rowley, Mary Resume.doc or Mary Rowley Cover Letter.doc
  - Do not include numbers
    - Be careful because Word does this automatically
    - Rowley, Mary Resume (4) – NOT good!
- Make sure documents are in correct format – Word, PDF, etc.
- Triple check before hitting submit – everything must be tailored to the specific position

Emailing

- Second most common way to submit documents
- Cover letter or resume can be the body of the email, if so attach the documents also
- If only attaching documents, include a short email
- Follow appropriate email etiquette
  - Be brief
  - Appropriate subject line – Job Title, Inquiry About
  - Professional greeting
    - Dear Mr. Marymount,
    - First sentence is a greeting
  - NEVER use shorthand or emoticons and remember words in all capital letters are considered screaming
  - Check spelling and grammar
  - Make sure you are sending the message from a professional email address
    - If you have a signature, make sure that is professional
    - Remove any automatic signatures (Sent from my I phone)
    - Remove any quotes that automatically appear
  - Be positive in your tone and word choice
  - Do not expect to be remembered from previous emails, include the history of the exchanges

THANK YOU NOTE

- Express gratitude
- Makes you stand out and memorable
- Helps establish and maintain a positive professional reputation

Thank you note etiquette

- Thank you notes can be hard-copy or emailed, based on circumstances
  - Meeting in person with a friend of your parents to talk about the finance industry – hard copy
  - Speaking via phone with the recruiter who scheduled your interviews – email
- For final round interviews most send an email and a hard copy
  - Make sure they do not say the same thing!

Email

- Send within 24 to 48 hours after every interview
- Address formally unless you are invited to call him/her by first name
  - If employer signs with his/her first name – use first name
  - If employer signs with his/her first and last name – use formal Ms. and Mr.
- Send individual emails to each person interviewer
  - Ask for business cards
Modify each email so interviewers do not receive the same message

- Express appreciation for the interviewer’s time and consideration of you as a candidate
- Try to incorporate a personal connection with the interviewer
  - Same major, hometown, play same sport, etc.
- Err on the side of formality as it demonstrates respect and good manners
- Refer to aspects of the interview confirmed your interest and confidence you are a good fit for the position
- Reiterate your interest in the position
- Proofread
- Keep a copy or bcc yourself

**Written note**

- Send within 48 hours after the interview – it will be post marked with the date sent
- It could be up to a week until the employer receives your note
- Invest in neutral color thank you cards
  - Commonly found on front of the card
    - Your initials
    - Marymount University name, seal, logo
    - Thank you
    - Do not use ones you have left from high school graduation
- Write with a black or blue pen
- Re-read the thank you email that you sent so you do not repeat phrases
  - Take time and go into more depth, the note is so you make an impression on the employer
- Express appreciation for the interviewer’s time and consideration
- Mention specific aspects of your discussion that made you confident you are the best match
- Be specific about what you hope to gain from the position and what you have to offer
- Address the employer formally, unless they have specified otherwise
- Send individual letters to each interviewer if multiple individuals were involved
- PROOFREAD!! Be sure to check spelling, grammar, etc.
  - Write it out on a piece of paper first

**OFFER CORRESPONDENCE**

**Verbal Offer**

- Tell the organization you are very excited and look forward to receiving the offer in writing with specifics
- If you are interviewing at elsewhere, contact them to let them know you received an offer and determine where they are in their recruiting process
- Once you know all your job options and your offer deadlines, decide whether you are ready to accept an offer or try to negotiate
- Do not accept until you have a written copy of all offer details

**Written Offer**

- Acknowledge your receipt of the offer
- Read the details as specified in the offer letter
- Respond in the mode of communication requested by the employer (email or phone)

**Acknowledging the Offer**

- Always first thank the employer for the opportunity
- Ask for clarification if you do not understand the terms of the offer
- If you are considering various opportunities
  - Indicate you do not yet have all the information you need to make your decision
  - Ask for a deadline as to when you need to give your answer
  - Most organizations are aware job seekers are looking at multiple options
• If you are waiting to hear back on another opportunity, but have to give an answer immediately
  o Tactfully and diplomatically ask for a deadline extension – do NOT wait to ask until the last minute
• If you are considering multiple positions at once
  o Treat everyone with respect and honesty
  o Maintain good relationships with organizations and individuals, it will help your long term career success

Declining the Offer
• Unless instructed otherwise, call the employer to tell him/her your decision
• Never say anything negative about the employer, even if your experience was negative
  o If this was the case, please let the Center for Career Services know
• Do not go into a lot of detail when you decline, common reasons:
  o Your personal circumstances have changed
  o Another position better match for your interests and goals
    ▪ Be prepared for the employer to ask about the offer and perhaps try to negotiate
    ▪ If you already accepted the other offer, decline the offer absolutely (regardless of negotiation)
    ▪ If not, be prepared to discuss negotiated terms and ask for the negotiated offer in writing
• It is not necessary to state what offer you accepted
  o If a better offer is the reason, the employer might ask about the offer
  o If you have already accepted the other offer, decline the offer absolutely
  o If you have not, be prepared to discuss negotiated terms
• Maintain the relationship with the employer through professional, courteous interactions – it could be a future contact

Accepting an Offer and Withdrawing From Job Search
• You made a commitment and must keep your word
• Terminate all other job search efforts and notify employers in contact you must withdraw from their process
  o Failing to notify employers the job search is discourteous and dishonest
• If you accepted an internship position, inform your academic internship mentor

CORRESPONDANCE RESOURCES
• Individual Career Appointments
  o Schedule an appointment through Jobs4Saints, by calling 703-284-5960 or via email on career.services@marymount.edu
  o Please select the Resume/Cover Letter Review for the Appointment Type
• Career Services Classes and Programs
  o Visit the website for a full list of classes and programs this semester For an up-to-date list of upcoming workshops and events, visit our website.
  o Request a class or program - email career.services@marymount.edu include:
    ▪ Name,
    ▪ Club/organization
    ▪ Potential dates and times