

Cover Letters, Thank you Notes, Professional Correspondence

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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**
 - Leave space after the recipient’s address
 - ‘Dear’
 - A specific name is preferable
 - Dear Ms. Marymount
 - General greetings
 - Hiring Manager
 - Company Name
 - Write out full name if unsure of gender
 - Use a colon
- **Body**
 - Written in first person
 - 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 inwhich gives me a unique perspective on this role
 - 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
 - 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
 - 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**
 - Sincerely, Best Regards, Thank you, Regards
 - Leave space to sign your name, typically 4 spaces
 - Type your full name

SUBMITTING DOCUMENTS

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 iPhone)
 - 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
 - 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
 - Treat everyone with respect and honesty
 - 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
 - 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:
 - Your personal circumstances have changed
 - 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
 - If a better offer is the reason, the employer might ask about the offer
 - If you have already accepted the other offer, decline the negotiated offer absolutely
 - 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
 - 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**
 - Schedule an appointment through Jobs4Saints, by calling 703-284-5960 or via email on career.services@marymount.edu
 - Please select the Resume/Cover Letter Review for the Appointment Type
- **Career Services Classes and Programs**
 - 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.](#)
 - Request a class or program - email career.services@marymount.edu include:
 - Name,
 - Club/organization
 - Potential dates and times