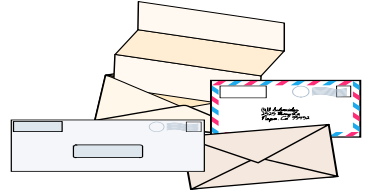


Elms College Career & Experiential Learning Center

Quick Tips - Cover Letters



- The Top: Include your address and telephone number at the top unless you have designed your own letter head (people tend to throw envelopes away). The date, the person's name and address then follow.
- The Salutation: Dear (appropriate title: Ms., Mr., Dr.) (the person's last name):
- The First Paragraph: Briefly state why you are writing and how you heard of the opening.
- The Middle Paragraph(s): Highlight your skills without repeating your resume. Some experts recommend that you give the reader at least 3 (5 would be great) reasons why you are a strong candidate for the position to which you are applying. Avoid vague statements like, "I work well with others." Instead, be specific "As a Resident Assistant, I used my interpersonal skills to enhance cooperation and communication among residents." Also, if you are responding to an advertisement, try to include the language the company used in the ad.
- If they have asked for additional information – for example your available schedule – you might add a fourth paragraph to summarize this information briefly.
- The Closing: Thank the reader for his or her consideration, indicate what will happen next (ask for action and let them know when you will call to follow up!) and mention any enclosures (your resume, portfolio, etc).
- Sincerely: Leave enough room to sign your name and then type your name.

Pretty simple, right? Here are some pitfalls to avoid:

1. To Whom it May Concern - show some initiative (and demonstrate that you are really interested in the position) by finding out the name of the person who has the power to hire you. The same holds true for "Dear Sir or Madam."
2. Rambling - whoever is reading your letter has a stack of letters to review. Be concise.
3. The Generic Letter - people who sift through letters can spot a mass-produced letter from 10 feet away. If the position really interests you, take the time to tailor it to the job and company - it really makes a difference. *(Try the 1,2,3 exercise!)*
4. Errors - check for spelling and grammatical errors - after all, if you are not careful when you are applying for a job, why should the employer believe that you will be careful once you are employed? Have someone proofread for you – the ARC is available to help too!
5. Sloppiness - keep a record of your job search correspondence (or keep copies of the letters) and be sure to follow up with the employer if you tell him or her that you will. Also, be certain that whoever answers your telephone does so appropriately (avoid funky answering machine messages and leave paper & pen nearby too).

Stop by the Career & Experiential Learning Center to see some examples or to have your cover letter reviewed before you send it out. You may set up an appointment by emailing careers@elms.edu.

Cover Letter Outline

Your Typed Name
Street Address
City, State Zip Code
Phone Number with Area Code
Enclosure

Date **(Start the date on line 13, or 2 inches from the top of the page)**

Individual's Name
Title
Name of Organization
Street Address
City, State Zip Code

Dear Mr./Ms. _____:

First Paragraph: State the reason for writing. Name the specific position or type of work for which you are applying. Mention how you learned of the opening.

Second Paragraph: Explain why you are interested in working for this employer (do some research) and specify how you are PERFECT for this position. Match the position description to your resume. Do not repeat the information on your resume, but refer to it. Include something special or unique about yourself that would "benefit" the employer. Remember, the reader will consider this an example of your writing skills.

Third Paragraph: Mention your resume is enclosed and indicate your desire to meet with the employer. Include day and evening contact information. Include a statement or question that will encourage the reader to respond. Be sure to communicate your plan to follow-up. You might state that you will be in the area on a certain date and would like to set up a meeting, or you will call on a certain date to set up a meeting. Never leave it up to the employer to get in touch with you. Finally, thank the employer for their time.

Sincerely,

Your Signature in blue or black ink

Your typed name

Sample Cover letter

Jonathan Smith
100 Main St.
Mytown, PA 10010
(516) 400-1000

November 18, 2008

Emily Jones
Director
ABC Corporation
1 Industry Plaza
Anytown, NY 12096

Dear Ms. Jones:

The Editor position for ABC Corporation in the Sunday Times is of great interest to me.

As a recent graduate from Elms College, I have a bachelor's degree in English with a minor in business and a minor in art. My experience includes an internship at: Lock Advertising in Los Angeles, Spotlight Incorporated in Portland, as well as freelance writing assignments for the Eclipse Journal and Hampshire Community College. A few samples of my writing are enclosed for your review.

Recently, as a temporary secretary/word-processor I have been responsible for creating a wide variety of documents and take great pleasure making sure each document looks good, reads well, and is error-free. I am organized and detail-oriented, work well under pressure and on deadline, and enjoy working with a variety of people.

Having served as the editor of my high school yearbook and previously as a section editor and staff member, I have extensive editorial, proofreading, layout, and design experience. The yearbook won first place in the Plymouth High School Press Conference for 2004. Most recently I completed a 32 page catalog past-up and layout project for Provincial Labs in Chelmsford.

I would welcome the opportunity to discuss with you how I might make similar contributions to the success of ABC Corporation. May we meet to discuss my qualifications at your convenience?

Sincerely,

Jonathan Smith