

Letter Writing Tips

Letter of Application/Cover Letter

If you have not had a formal interview with a company but would like to make application by letter, remember that the prospective employer is influenced by its appearance and your presentation. Listed below are some simple rules that may be followed for a letter of application:

1. The letter should be an original typewritten copy, not a photocopy or carbon copy. Its appearance should be neat and free of grammatical and typographical errors. Try to be brief, but express your interest in the company and in the particular job for which you are applying.
 - a. Introduce yourself in the opening paragraph.
 - b. State the reason for your interest in the company and list your qualifications for specific kinds of work.
 - c. Request an appointment for an interview, giving the time you might be in the area or the possibility of meeting a representative from the company in your own geographical area.
2. Do not extend your remarks past one page; employers are busy people and one page is sufficient to state your case.
3. Enclose a resume.

Be sure to keep copies of all job search correspondence.

Thank You/Follow-Up Letter

A thank you letter for a campus interview, though not mandatory, is a positive way to show interest in a company. If the interviewers do not notify you by the time which they had indicated, a note reminding them tactfully of your talk would be appropriate. The follow-up letter should include an expression of appreciation for the interview and indicate the specific date and location of your interview. Restate your interest in the company and the job. Add any additional information to clarify your position and close with a tactful request for further action. You have little to lose at this point by refreshing their memory, and you might receive a favorable response.

Postponement Letter

This letter is appropriate if you wish to postpone any definite action on an offer. Make reference to the reason for the letter (i.e., an offer by telephone, etc.), state your continued interest, and indicate the time period you will require to reach a decision about employment.

Letter of Decline (to turn down a job offer)

Maintain a positive tone as you thank the employer for their interest in you and reject the offer. Your promptness in notifying the employer will be especially appreciated, and may open an opportunity for an offer of employment to another Bridgewater College graduate.

Acceptance Letter

This letter should be written as soon as you have made a positive decision. Usually it is best not to assume you have a job offer until you receive it in writing. Remember, this letter constitutes an employment contract. Restate the details of the agreement to avoid any misunderstanding (title, place, work, salary, etc.). Be sure to give the date you will be available for work. Finally, do not forget to thank the company for selecting you for the position. It is a good idea to send the letter by registered mail.

Writing and Producing Job-Search Correspondence

To a large extent, securing an appropriate position is a challenge of communicating effectively. Job-search letters should reflect sound writing practices and promote your candidacy. You must communicate your value to a prospective employer in an understanding, brief and positive way.

The following guidelines should help you achieve those goals:

1. Design your letters to be work-centered and employer-centered, not self-centered. Your letters are marketing tools that should address the needs of employers and evoke a desire to learn more about you.
2. Never delegate responsibility for your job search to anyone else. Do all the writing yourself and take responsibility for follow-up with employers.
3. Always address your letters to a specific individual with his or her correct title and business address.
4. Use high-quality stationery and envelopes. Be sure to use the same stationery throughout the letter writing and resume process.
5. Keep the letter to one page. Eliminate extraneous words and avoid rehashing materials from your resume.
6. Produce an error-free, clean copy.
7. Tailor your letters for each situation. Generic mass-produced letters are unprofessional.
8. Show appreciation to the employer for considering your application, for granting you an interview, etc.
9. Always keep your reader in mind. Make your letters easy to read and attractive.
10. Be timely. Demonstrate that you know how to do business for yourself and, by implication, for others.
11. Be honest. Always be able to back up your claims with evidence and specific examples from your experience.

When reflected in your writing, these job-search guidelines should communicate that you are a responsible person with a positive attitude who knows how to operate in a professional environment.

Types of Letters

Communication skills are among the most important skills you bring to your career, and your job-search letters normally will be the first sample most employers will have of your competency in this area. Your letters should be functional, understandable, easy to read, and pleasant in tone. Remember, every communication act is a message about you.

There are several basic letters you will probably use during your job search. Each has its own function and should be used accordingly. The types of letters are described when necessary and illustrations are provided for each. Be sure to sign the original letters and to keep copies of all correspondence.

Application or Cover Letter - The purpose of this letter is to get your enclosed resume read and to generate interviews. Use this type of letter in response to specific job advertisements and vacancy announcements. Your strategy is to demonstrate that your qualifications fit the requirements of the position. Study the position description carefully and decide on one or more themes - education, experience, interests, responsibility, etc. - that show persuasively how well you fit the position. Link major job dimensions with your related past performances and experience.

Structure your cover letter with three or four paragraphs:

Paragraph 1: Come to the point and reveal your purpose and interest. Identify the position and your source of information (school placement office, newspaper ad, faculty referral, etc.). Introduce your themes.

Paragraph 2: Outline your strongest qualifications that match the position requirements based on the themes you selected. As much as possible, provide evidence of your related experiences and accomplishments. Make reference to your enclosed resume.

Paragraph 3: Convince the employer that you have the personal qualities and motivation to perform well in the position. Sell yourself.

Paragraph 4: Suggest an action plan. Request an interview and indicate that you will call during a specific time period to discuss interview possibilities. Show appreciation to the reader for his or her time and consideration.

Sample: Application Letter

1255 Hampton Boulevard
Norfolk, VA 23517
March 15, 1999

Ms. Dana C. Strouse
Manager of Human Resources
Atlantic Coast Industries, Inc.
2920 Virginia Beach, VA 23464

Dear Ms. Strouse:

I am applying for the position of systems analyst which was advertised on March 12 with the placement service at Old Dominion University. The position seems to fit very well with my education, experience, and career interests.

Your position requires experience in computer systems, financial applications software, and end-user consulting. With a major in Management Information Systems, I have training on mainframes, minicomputers, and microcomputers as well as with a variety of software programs and applications. My practical experience in my university's computer center as a programmer and as a student consultant for system users gave me valuable exposure to complex computer operations. Additionally, I worked as a cooperative education student in computing operations for a large bank where I gained knowledge of financial systems. My enclosed resume provides more details on my qualifications.

My background and career goals seem to match your job requirements well. I am confident that I can perform the job effectively. Furthermore, I am genuinely interested in the position and in working for Atlantic Coast Industries. Your firm has an excellent reputation and comes highly recommended to me.

Would you please consider my request for a personal interview to discuss further my qualifications and to learn more about this opportunity? I shall call you next week to see if a meeting can be arranged. Should you need to reach me, please feel free to call me at 555-4388. If I am not in, please leave a message on my answering machine and I will return your call within a day, or you can E-mail me at: .

Thank you for your consideration. I look forward to talking with you.

Sincerely yours,

(Written signature)

Debbie Rodgers

Enclosure

Prospecting Letter - The purposes of this letter are to prospect for possible vacancies in your occupation, to get your resume read, and to generate interviews. Prospecting letters are used extensively for long-distance searches. Target specific individuals in specific organizations. Structure this letter similarly to the application letter, but instead of using position information, focus on broader occupational and/or organizational dimensions to describe how your qualifications match the work environment.

Sample: Prospecting Letter

849 Baldwin Avenue
Corpus Christi, TX 78403
June 30, 1999

Mr. Timothy H. Johnson
Director of College Recruiting
Midwest Mercantile Company
4500 Randolph Drive
Chicago, IL 60601

Dear Mr. Johnson:

I read your company's description in the [NACE Job Choices](#) and would like to inquire about employment opportunities in your management training program. I want to work in retail management and would like to relocate to the Chicago area after graduation.

I shall receive my BS degree this December. My interest in business started in Junior Achievement while in high school and developed further through a variety of sales and retail positions during college. My internship with a large department store convinced me to pursue a career in retail. When I researched the top retailers in Chicago, Midwest Mercantile emerged as having a strong market position, an excellent training program, and reputation for excellent customer service. In short, you provide the kind of professional retail environment I seek.

My resume is enclosed for your consideration. My education and experience match the qualifications you seek in your management trainees, but they don't tell the whole story. I know from customer and supervisor feedback that I have the interpersonal skills and motivation needed to build a successful career in retail management. And my relatively extensive experience gives me confidence in my career direction and in my abilities to perform competently.

I know how busy you must be during this time of year, but I would appreciate a few minutes of your time. I shall call you during the week of July 12 to discuss employment possibilities. In the

meantime, if you need to contact me, my number is 888-555-1234. Please leave a message if I'm not in, and I'll return your call the next day. My E-mail addresses is: .

Thank you very much for considering my request. I look forward to talking with you.

Sincerely,

(Written signature)

Logan Miller

Enclosure

Sample: Prospecting Letter

John Jackson III
100 S. College
College Station, TX 77840
September 9, 1999

Mr. Jim James
Senior Partner
James, Phillips and Smith
1100 W. Main Street
Houston, TX 77030

Dear Mr. James:

I am writing to express my interest in working in general management consulting. My specific interest lies in the area of long-range planning and analysis of company policies, objectives, and organizational structure and design.

A number of my previous assignments in the military service have included planning responsibilities as well as restructuring organizations to meet changing requirements. Additionally, I possess a substantial degree of experience in oral presentations, many of which were designed as decision briefings. I am currently pursuing an MS in Management which I expect to complete in December. I have enclosed my resume for your information.

I would very much appreciate the opportunity to interview with you for any positions you might have available which match my interest and experience. I look forward to hearing from you and thank you for your consideration.

Very truly yours,

(Written signature)

John Jackson III

Enclosure

Networking Letter - This letter is designated to generate information interviews - not job interviews - which allow you to meet individuals who can give you specific information about your intended career. Your purposes in seeking information interviews may vary, but your reasons for wanting to meet with a contact person must be genuine and sincere. Information interviewing remains a viable way to conduct job market research, to refine career goals, and to uncover vacancy information in an industry or a geographical region. Information interviewing is not a magic shortcut to employment; it requires solid preparation, sincerity, and much effort. The networking letter is the first step in the information interviewing process.

Sample: Networking Letter

511 Powhatan Avenue
Norfolk, VA 23517
April 21, 2000

Ms. Cynthia Milburn, Manager
Jones, Smith and Doe, P.C.
Certified Public Accountants
1400 World Trade Center
Norfolk, VA 23510

Dear Ms. Milburn:

Dr. Carr, professor of accounting at Old Dominion University, suggested that I contact you. He thought that you would be in an excellent position as an alumna to assist me with a career decision.

As an accounting student, I am exploring which career path to pursue. Public accounting, management accounting, and IRS work all sound interesting to me at this point, but I would like to get your advice on the long-term career implications of each path as well as a better handle on the day-to-day activities of a CPA.

I shall call you next week to see if we can arrange a brief meeting at your convenience. Thank you for considering my request.

Sincerely,

(Written signature)

Anna E. English

Sample: Thank-You Letter

2913 Baxter Road
Virginia Beach, VA 23465
January 30, 1999

Dr. Janie Edwards, Director
Technical Design Group
Atlantic Engineering Systems, Inc.
1222 Warwick Avenue
Newport News, VA 23607

Dear Dr. Edwards:

I want to thank you very much for interviewing me yesterday for the associate engineer position. I enjoyed meeting you and learning more about your research and design work.

My enthusiasm for the position and my interest in working for AES were strengthened as a result of the interview. I think my education and cooperative education experiences fit nicely with the job requirements, and I'm sure that I could make a significant contribution to the firm over time.

I want to reiterate my strong interest in the position and in working with you and your staff. You provide the kind of opportunity I seek. Please feel free to call me at 800-685-5555 if I can provide you with any additional information.

Again, thank you for the interview and your consideration.

Sincerely,

(Written signature)

Kyle Barrett

Sample: Follow-Up Letter

November 12, 1998

Ms. Diane Spencer
Professional Recruitment Office
Houston Lighting & Power Company
P.O. Box 1700
Houston, TX 77001

Dear Ms. Spencer:

I wish to thank you for the opportunity to talk with you during your visit to Bridgewater College's Office of Career Services last week. I enjoyed our visit and found that the information you provided has strengthened my interest in the possibility of employment as an accountant with your firm.

The opportunities you described in revenue accounting with Houston Lighting & Power match my accounting and business computing science background, and would provide me the professional challenge I am looking for.

I thank you again, and I look forward to hearing from you in the near future.

Sincerely,

(Written signature)

Terri Stroh

Sample: Postponement Letter

600 Southwest Parkway
College Station, TX 77840
October 25, 1999

Kim Carson
Central Intelligence Agency
P.O. Box 53097
Dallas, TX 75250

Dear Mr. Carson:

This letter is to thank you for and acknowledge your offer of employment dated October 22, 1999. That communication invited me to join the Agency at a monthly salary of \$2,140.00.

While your offer of employment is most attractive, I felt that it would be to our mutual advantage to delay action with respect to this opportunity until December 18, 1999. Due to

pending offers of employment and plant trips through December 1, 1999, I would prefer to delay my decision until that time.

If this date is not convenient please let me know. Your offer is most attractive and I thank you for the confidence you have shown in me.

Sincerely,

(Written signature)

Steven Collins

E-mail:

Sample: Acceptance Letter

507 Shore Drive
Hampton, VA 23501
April 20, 1999

Mr. Jack Sprig, Division Manager
Data International Corporation
1212 Corporation Lane
Richmond, VA 23312

Dear Mr. Sprig:

I am writing to confirm my acceptance of your employment offer of April 16 and to tell you how delighted I am to be joining Data International in Richmond. The work is exactly what I have prepared for and hoped to do. I feel confident that I can make a significant contribution to the corporation and I am grateful for the opportunity you have given me.

As we discussed, I will report to work at 8:00 a.m. on May 21 and will have completed the medical examination and drug testing by the start date. Additionally, I shall complete all employment and insurance forms for the new employee orientation on May 22.

I look forward to working with you and your fine team. I appreciate your confidence in me and am very happy to be joining your staff.

Sincerely

(Written signature)

Pamela Swanson

E-mail:

Sample: Letter of Decline

800 Marion Pugh #1000
College Station, TX 77840
October 19, 1999

William Buckley, Supervisor
AT&T
5500 LBJ Freeway, Suite 1000
Dallas, TX 75240

Dear Mr. Buckley:

Thank you for your letter offering me employment with your organization. I find your offer very attractive.

After careful consideration, I must advise you that I have elected to pursue graduate studies at XYZ School of Business Administration and will be entering their program next September. On completion of this program, I would appreciate the opportunity to reinvestigate employment possibilities with your organization.

Again, thank you for the employment opportunity you gave me. I would appreciate favorable action with regard to my employment application in the future.

Sincerely,

(Written signature)

Jennifer Hastings

E-mail:

Sample: Request to Close Applicant File

2800 Jennifer Drive
College Station, TX 77845
July 15, 1999

Larry Jones
Sr. Group Human Resource Manager
Axciom Corporation

301 Industrial Blvd.
Conway, AR 72302

Dear Mr. Jones:

I interviewed with your firm during your April visit to the Bridgewater campus. At that time, you asked for a copy of my transcript, arranged for me to take a qualifying exam the following day, and indicated that I would be invited to visit your company some time in May.

The purpose of this letter is to inform you that I have recently accepted employment with another company, and would like to request that my application for employment with Axiom Corporation be canceled.

Thank you for your interest in me as a candidate.

Sincerely,

(Written signature)

Barbara Brown