

Correspondence

Cover letters are just as important as resumes in conveying your value to employers. You'll use them to:

- Introduce yourself to prospective employers and motivate them to read your resume.
- State your career interests and highlight your strengths in relation to job responsibilities and/or organizations.
- Demonstrate your writing skills, professionalism, and courtesy.
- Reveal your personality and enthusiasm for the position, organization, and field.

You'll need to develop several types of letters. After you have drafted your letters, visit your college career office or Cornell Career Services in 103 Barnes Hall for assistance to strengthen them. Samples of all these types of letters are found on pages 21-34.

Information Interview Letters

Write to an individual working in a field of interest to request an information interview. (Refer to the section on career networking on page 6 to learn more about developing your career interests through information interviews.)

- The goal of your letter will be to arrange a meeting or phone call to learn about the person's work.
- State how you identified the person, what you would like to learn, and when/how long you would like to meet or talk with them by phone.
- Make it clear you are seeking information, not applying for a position.

Cover Letters

Letters of Inquiry

Explore employment possibilities through an inquiry letter when you are interested in working at an organization, but don't know if an opening exists.

Career Tip

Be sure to have your resume and job-search correspondence reviewed by a CCS career or peer advisor. Many of our offices offer these critiques on a walk-in basis.

- Target the organization's hiring needs by learning about tasks or positions for which you may be qualified.
- Visit the website and/or call the organization to obtain information.

Guidelines for Writing Letters

Reach your professional goals by preparing well-written and thoughtful letters.

- For more information and guidance, see the annotated cover letter on page 16.
- Learn the name and title of the person responsible for hiring in the department that interests you; address your correspondence to that person.
- Convey that you are informed about the organization and knowledgeable about the job responsibilities.
- Describe how your qualifications meet the employer's hiring needs.
- Demonstrate your competence in communicating—a critical skill you would bring to the job.
- Refer in your opening sentences to a personal or professional contact who has directed you to the organization, if applicable.

Letters of Application

Write to a prospective employer in response to a specific job you have seen advertised or have identified through networking.

- Keep in mind that the primary purpose of cover letters and resumes sent to employers is to obtain interviews.
- Motivate employers through a well-written cover letter to read your resume to learn more about you.

Follow-Up Letters

Thank-You Letters

Thank interviewers for meeting with you following information or job interviews.

- Reiterate your interest in the field and the position.

- Recall aspects of the interview that were especially helpful or enlightening.

Speak with a career advisor if you have concerns about whether to send an e-mail message, a handwritten note, or a more formal letter, and whom to write to if you spoke with more than one person.

Offer-Acceptance Letters

Respond to the employer to express your pleasure at receiving the offer and your enthusiasm for joining the organization.

- For more information, see the *Job Offers* section on page 66.
- Confirm the terms and conditions of your employment, including salary, start date, benefits, etc.

- Request a written confirmation of the detailed offer if you have not received one.

Offer-Decline Letters

Inform a potential employer immediately that you have decided to take another position.

- Thank the employer for the offer and for the opportunity to interview.
- State that you have decided to decline the offer after careful consideration of your current interests and goals.
- Pave the way for future opportunities with the employer and networking with individuals you met there through a cordial decline letter.
- For more information, see the *Job Offers* section on page 66.

Career Tip

CCS offers a wide variety of programs to assist you with career planning, developing job-search skills, applying for postgraduate study, and more. Stop by one of our offices to pick up a copy of our *Career Event Calendar*, or check the schedule at career.cornell.edu.



E-Mail Etiquette

If you will be communicating with employers via e-mail, keep these guidelines in mind:

- Use an appropriate subject header.
- Include your cover letter and resume within the body of your message, since employers may not be able to open attachments.
- Begin your message with "Dear Mr./Ms." and spell the recipient's name correctly.
- Introduce yourself early in the message and state your reason for writing.
- Be professional and positive; the language in job-related messages should be more formal than in other e-mail messages.
- Avoid strange fonts, distractions at the bottom of your messages such as cute signatures or quotes, and symbols sometimes used in messages sent to family or friends.
- Keep your message brief; don't ask a number of questions or ramble on.
- Proofread your message carefully before sending it to avoid spelling or grammatical errors, formatting problems, etc.
- Type your full name to "sign" your e-mail.

Letter Tips

Do

- Use standard business-letter format and generous margins.
- Single-space paragraphs and double-space between paragraphs.
- Address the individual by name and use his/her appropriate title.
- Use the person's full name if you don't know his/her gender (e.g., "Dear Pat Smith").
- Attract attention with a strong first paragraph. Limit letter to 3-4 short paragraphs.
- Refer to your enclosed resume.
- Highlight and expand upon the most relevant information in your resume, using specific examples.
- Use correct grammar.
- Have someone proofread letters to make sure they are error-free.
- Use high-quality bond paper and envelopes in white, ivory, or light gray.
- Keep copies of your letters.

Don't

- Use the passive voice.
- Include extraneous information.
- Repeat verbatim what's in your resume.
- Point out weaknesses or lack of experience.
- Begin too many sentences with "I."
- Use jargon or excessive wordiness.
- Exceed one page.
- Copy exact wording from letter examples in this *Guide*.
- Assume spellcheck will identify all errors.
- Overlook signing your letters.
- Emphasize what you hope to get from the experience, but rather what you can contribute.