



University of Wisconsin – River Falls
Career Services – 24 East Hathorn Hall
(715) 425-3572
www.uwrf.edu/ccs

Cover Letters

There are five types of cover letters used during the job search process: **application letters** (serve as an introduction to your resume), **prospecting letters** (an inquiry about possible vacancies or a request for an informational interview), **thank you letters** (a follow-up to an interview), **acceptance letters** (to accept a job offer), or **rejection letters** (used to thank an employer for a job offer, but to reject it). Many job seekers concentrate their efforts on developing a resume, but dedicate little time to writing effective letters. While a resume is important, a letter is an opportunity to further market your qualifications. And both the resume and cover letter provide the employer with a first impression of your communication skills.

Application Letters

This type of letter is used to apply for specific openings and accompanies your resume. It gives you an opportunity to introduce yourself to an employer and provides a link between the job, your skills, and experience.

- ❖ The application letter should inform the reader why he or she is receiving the resume. If you have already spoken to them by phone or in person, note this in your letter (preferably in the first paragraph!) Hiring officials talk to many applicants each day. Do not assume they will remember you.
- ❖ Should give detailed information about your qualifications without repeating information from your resume verbatim. Instead, state the value of your experiences, education, or personal qualities. Ask yourself “What have I learned from these experiences?” Then relate this to the skills you can provide to the employer. **Emphasize what you can do for the employer**, not how you will personally benefit from being hired for the job.
- ❖ When applying for a specific position, your letter should reflect the qualifications listed in the actual job posting. The closer the match between the employer’s requirements and your background, the more likely you will be contacted for an interview.
- ❖ Letters should be professional, yet written creatively enough to attract the attention of the reader.

Letters of Interest/Prospecting Letters

Letters of interest are sent to organizations to investigate possible job vacancies. State your reason for inquiry in the letter. How did you find out about the organization? What prompted you to send a letter? Did you receive a referral from someone who works at the organization?

- ❖ The central paragraphs will be much the same as an application letter. Provide examples of your qualifications to persuade the employer to consider you for a position.
- ❖ It is important to follow these letters with a phone call, since you may never receive a response if no positions exist. In your letter mention the time frame in which you will be contacting the person. Then make sure you follow-up as promised. Allow 5-10 business days before you contact them.

Application Letters

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 performance and experience.

Julie Thomas

1298 Sixth Street
Park Forest, IL 53409

July 18, 2003

Ms. Jill Smith
Manager of Human Resources
Great Lakes Industries, Inc.
2900 Virginia Boulevard
Chicago, IL 53422

Dear Ms. Smith:

Please accept this letter and enclosed resume as an application for the internship position of Systems Analyst at Great Lakes Industries, Inc. The position fits 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 computer systems and a minor in business finance, 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.

My background and career goals match your job requirements well. I am confident that I can perform the job effectively. I look forward to discussing my qualifications with you further. I may be reached at 308-245-1992.

Sincerely,

Julie Ann Thomas

Julie Ann Thomas

First Paragraph

State why you are writing, identify the position for which you would like to be considered, and indicate how you heard of the position. Be specific.

Second Paragraph

Your goal here is to show how you can be useful to this particular organization. Describe what strengths you have to offer this employer. You might use one of the following approaches:

- 1.) Illustrate the relationship between your skills and experience and the position for which you are applying.
- 2.) Describe your previous accomplishments as they relate to the position.
- 3.) Identify three reasons for the employer to consider you for the position.

Third Paragraph

End your letter by clarifying what will happen next and how they can most easily reach you.

Application Letter Example

Toni C. Morrison

*550 North Alabama Street
River Falls, WI 54022
(555) 555-5555*

May 20, 2002

Dr. Douglas Johnson
Saint Paul Public Schools
360 Colbourne Street
Saint Paul, MN 55102

Dear Dr. Johnson:

This letter of application for the position of Secondary Language Arts teacher expresses a sincere interest in interviewing and working for the public school system of Saint Paul. Enclosed is my application form and resume. A credential file and transcript are being sent to your office.

As an English Teacher, I bring real world experience to this position. Having successfully owned and operated a business, my practical knowledge and survival skills are extensive. My background encompasses rich and varied experiences that have utilized the English language to function in society. Saint Paul's motto of "lifelong learning" has been my experience.

I also have all the qualities for an English Language Arts and Literature Teacher, expressed in my innate appreciation and love of the language. Reading and writing have always been fundamental aspects of my life and, thus, my teaching. As a person, I combine thoughtful intelligence with empathetic concern. As a teacher, I incorporate firm expectations of my students into a flexible approach of addressing students' individual learning styles. My students appreciate the diversity expressed in my classroom. Regarding professional relationships, I have been commended for using tact and diplomacy in dealing with staff, administration, and parents.

Recently, the State of Minnesota imposed guidelines regarding mandates for the year 2000. The challenge of working with students in the Saint Paul School District to ensure that they can meet state mandated evaluations interests me. I will work to implement the "road to change" that Saint Paul advocated throughout the school district.

Please consider my application and resume as well as my credential file and references. If you need any further information please call me at 555.555.5555. I look forward to an interview to discuss how my qualifications are suited to your school district.

Sincerely,

Toni C. Morrison

Toni C. Morrison

Application Letter Example

Matthew McConaughey

616 Ed TV Street, Hudson, WI 54016
(715) 333-1111 | mattc@yahoo.com

March 11, 2003

Ms. Cally Lausted, Human Resources Director
University of Wisconsin – River Falls
410 South Third Street
River Falls, WI 54022

Dear Ms. Lausted:

Please accept this letter and resume as my application for the IS Comprehensive Services Senior position with the University of Wisconsin – River Falls (UWRF) Career Services Office. I currently perform all of the duties listed in the position announcement as a temporary worker, and welcome the opportunity to broaden my contributions to the University.

Please allow me to highlight my qualifications as they relate to the requirements outlined in the position description:

Your Requirements:

- Experience managing database software
- Experience managing web sites
- Experience as technical support specialist
- Experience in training and public speaking

My Qualifications:

- Installed and managed Brass Ring database for UWRF Career Services; supported various career, counseling, and outreach databases.
- Managed Career Services, Academic Success Center, non-profit, and for-profit web sites.
- Functioned as technical support specialist for Career Services, resolving hardware and software issues. Deferred appropriate hardware and software problems/requests to UWRF ITS Department.
- Four years experience training corporate and university employees on standard and proprietary software. Two years experience presenting workshops to student groups and classes on technical topics, such as Brass Ring registration, Internet job searching, online portfolios, and designing web sites.

The opportunity to discuss my qualifications with the hiring committee would be greatly appreciated. During work hours, I may be reached at (715) 425-3572. You may reach me at (715) 555-1111 in the evening.

Sincerely,

Matthew McConaughey

Matthew McConaughey

Cover Letter Critiquing Guide

Layout/Appearance

- ❖ Always type your letters. Because of wider access to computers and printers, employers expect your letter to be printed in a quality, professional-looking font. Adhere to the block style format for business correspondence (double-space between paragraphs; text flush to the left).
- ❖ Typos, misspellings and grammatical errors can leave a negative impression with employers and cause your application to be rejected. Have at least two other people proofread to make sure your letter is error-free.
- ❖ Have you signed your letter at the bottom of the page in blue or black ink?
- ❖ Have you printed your letter on quality paper that matches your resume? (When possible, match the heading of your resume and the heading of your cover letter for a professional look).
- ❖ Cover letters should be concise and simple, yet still fully discuss your qualifications. Have you kept your letter to one page?



Writing Style

- ❖ Have you avoided beginning all your sentences with the word “I”? (Place a greater emphasis on the word “you” when possible!)
- ❖ Avoid the phrase “I am writing” in your opening paragraph, as this is understood in a letter.
- ❖ Lengthy paragraphs are overwhelming to read. Have you divided text into several paragraphs when necessary to keep paragraphs short?
- ❖ Have you used transition phrases and topic sentences to improve the flow of the letter between paragraphs?
- ❖ Have you eliminated statements of doubt? Your cover letter should always convey confidence and a positive attitude. Avoid any statements or words that sound like you are unsure of your abilities or the contributions you have and can make. For instance, statements like, “If you think I am qualified”, or “I hope you find my...” will not assure the reader that you are a confident individual.

Overall Impression/Marketing Effectiveness of Content

- ❖ Is your letter addressed to a specific person, and have you spelled the individual’s name correctly? (If the job posting did not indicate a name, you may need to call the organization to obtain this information.)
- ❖ Is your letter individually tailored to the position and organization, emphasizing how your specific qualifications match the employer’s needs?
- ❖ Have you used factual statements regarding an organization rather than flattery to gain attention of the employer?
- ❖ Is the tone of your letter professional, yet show enthusiasm for the job and the organization?
- ❖ Have you written your letter in a style that conveys self-confidence in your abilities without being egotistical or overly aggressive?
- ❖ Do not oversell yourself or appear too desperate. Phrases such as “I will work for free if you give me the chance,” or “I will take any job you have available” are not effective.
- ❖ Did you skirt the salary issue? If you are requested to provide salary requirements explain that you need more information regarding the position and provide a range of what you consider appropriate for the market and your experience. Avoid commented on your salary history as it may or may not be relevant to the position you are applying for.
- ❖ Are you prepared to follow through on any action stated in your letter, such as a phone call to the employer?

Prospect Letter Example

Alan Greenspan

2020 Pennsylvania Avenue
Washington D.C. 55000
(555) 555-5555 | alan@finance.gov

August 4, 2004

Ms. Carmen Croonquist, Director
Career Services
University of Wisconsin-River Falls
24 East Hathorn
River Falls, WI 54022

Dear Ms. Croonquist:

President George W. Bush suggested that I contact you regarding a possible opening in the position of Peer Advisor. I am looking for an internship in business and feel that this position would be perfect for meeting the internship criteria.

After taking the course, Business and Professional Speaking, I have gained experience in writing and critiquing resumes and cover letters and holding mock interviews. Working in group projects in many of my business courses and interacting with customers as a server at Perkins has dramatically strengthened my interpersonal skills. Having this experience, I feel well qualified to represent Career Services as a Peer Advisor.

Career Services would benefit by hiring me because not only am I qualified, but I thoroughly enjoy working with and helping people. Learning more about the concepts of career planning and job hunting excites me. I already collect and read any available information on occupational research. It is important not only in the business world, but in every job to be knowledgeable about career and occupational strategies.

I will call you at the end of the week to talk further and discuss a chance to meet personally at your convenience. If you prefer, you may reach me at (555) 555-5555.

Thank you and I look forward to meeting you.

Sincerely,

Alan J. Greenspan

Alan J. Greenspan

Thank-You Notes & Letters

A letter sent following an interview or informational interview is not only good manners, it is **essential**. It assists the employer in remembering you and your unique qualifications. A recruiter may interview many candidates throughout the day. Letters serve as a reminder, and can also be considered as **marketing tools**. A thank-you letter also leaves the employer with a favorable impression. If the employer is having difficulty deciding between you and another candidate, a well-written thank you letter could play an important role in the decision to hire you.

Send a thank-you letter within 48 hours of your interview and keep it to two to three short paragraphs. A short statement about your qualifications and continued interest in the position may be added. Be sure to get the correct spelling of the person(s) who conducted the interview and try to send a thank-you letter to each person who interviewed you. It's ok to send a handwritten thank-you note as long as it's on professional card stock and if the interview was not in a strictly formal setting. Use a type written letter if you have handwriting that is difficult to read or if the interview was very formal.

David Arquette
555 Fawn Lake Drive
Minneapolis, MN 55555

January 25, 2003

Dr. Monica Geller Bing
National Broadcasting Company
Atlantic Engineering Systems, Inc
555 Warwick Avenue
Newport News, VA 22222

Dear Dr. Geller Bing:

I want to thank you very much for interviewing me yesterday for the Public Relations Internship Position. I enjoyed meeting you and learning more about your pilot newsletter.

My enthusiasm for the position and my interest in working for NBC 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 555/555-5555 if I can provide you with any additional information.

Again, thank you for the interview and your consideration.

Respectfully,
David Arquette
David Arquette

First Paragraph

Express thanks and appreciation for the interview, courtesy, and consideration extended to you. State job for which you were interviewed, date of interview, and place where it was conducted.

Second Paragraph

Reaffirm your interest in the position or company. Reemphasize your strongest qualifications. Draw attention to the good match between your qualifications and the job requirements.

Third Paragraph

Show willingness to provide any additional clarifying data or statements and submit any further information you may want to add to your application.

Acceptance Letters



Acceptance letters should specifically describe your understanding of the responsibilities and rewards of your new position. While the thought of an employment contract makes many managers fear a potential lawsuit, your written acceptance can serve the same purpose as this legal document without creating the accompanying paranoia. Indeed, before our society became so litigious, the main purpose of an employment contract was simply to outline the mutual expectations of the involved parties so that everyone clearly understood the basis for the relationship. Your acceptance letter can still do this without the nasty baggage associated with a contract.

Perhaps you have noticed how no two people seem to recall events or conversations the same way, or their recollections of an event may be correct, but their interpretation of it differs. Filtered perceptions and misinterpretations often occur in interviews when both parties are trying to impress one another and encourage a budding relationship. Although neither person means to misrepresent themselves, misunderstandings may occur nonetheless.

If you write an acceptance letter stating your understanding of your job responsibilities, compensation, reporting relationship, and anticipated (but not assured) future, you give both yourself and your manager a “constitution” for starting your new venture. If your employer reads it and finds that you each have different perceptions, you and he/she can set the record straight before the original miscommunication snowballs possibly destroying your relationship. A letter of acceptance is a benchmark for describing where you began your career at the company. As your career progresses, you can use it before or during performance appraisals, raises or promotions to illustrate how your responsibilities have increased. Or if your career seems like it has hit a road block, the letter can serve as a gentle reminder of the first time you and your manager discussed your future.

While this letter is not an official contract, it will probably go into a permanent employment file that human resources will keep under lock and key. If a disagreement over your responsibilities arises, you have a historical document to back you up.

A Word of Warning - Because so many companies have been sued for breaking implicit contracts, management may get nervous when it sees your letter. If you detect such a concern, reassure them about your motives and offer to destroy it. But keep in mind that their paranoia about being sued may stem from actual events, not just horror stories in the business media. A good manager is a good communicator who will appreciate your efforts to assure a good start. They do not need to worry about legal misunderstandings because they are able to resolve misperceptions before they become problems. Good supervisors rarely land in court.

Writing Your Letter of Acceptance

In your acceptance letter, include the various issues that impact your decision to take the position. These include your job title, start date, location, salary or commission and potential bonuses, responsibilities, relocation package if applicable, reporting relationship, and opportunities for growth (if you perform up to expectations). As management reads it, they can compare their recollections with yours and either confirm your thinking or act immediately to resolve any differences.

Your letter should be a genuine, enthusiastic, and friendly summary. Since it serves as the semiofficial document for starting a mutually beneficial relationship, it should sound pleasant, not demanding.

Acceptance Letter Example

555 Terrace Drive
MEL BROOKS
Seattle, WA 99999
555-555-5555

November 20, 2003

Mr. Ben Stiller
Managing Partner
Rincon Taylor
555 Friendship Place
Seattle, WA 99999

Dear Mr. Stiller:

I am really pleased to accept your offer of employment for the position of Senior Accountant at a starting salary of \$4,000 per month commencing January 2, 2003. While I look forward to taking a little time off during the holidays, I will appear bright and early at 555 Friendship Place first thing next year.

Based on our interview discussions, I look forward to working directly with you and Jerry Stiller on the firm's largest domestic accounts. Because I have extensive experience in audits and tax returns for Fortune 500 companies, I should be able to hit the ground running and relieve you and Jerry of the tax work for these firms by the end of the first quarter. Then both of you will have more time to concentrate on the company's international client base, which we all agree has tremendous potential for future growth.

As I mentioned in our prior conversations, I plan to make Rincon Taylor my business home for the long term and look forward to growing in my responsibilities as the company increases its clients. I would eventually like to be involved in some international accounts, both because I am working on an MBA in International Business, and because I believe the future of the firm will be predicated on our serving global organizations.

Thank you for choosing me to be a part of your team. I am most enthusiastic about the opportunity to work with you while making a contribution to Seattle's best accounting firm.

Sincerely,

Mel Brooks

Mel Brooks

Rejection Letters

A polite refusal is an applicant's responsibility as well as a professional courtesy. You notify the employer that you are not interested in working for the company and thereby allow him/her to continue to search as quickly as possible. Also closing the door gently, ending negotiation pleasantly on a note of goodwill, makes good sense in terms of the future. In writing a refusal letter, use the indirect plan, giving reasons before saying no as described below.

Cameron Crowe
555 Vanilla Sky Avenue
St. Paul, MN 55555

March 12, 2003

Ms. Nicole Kidman
Lead Actress
Australian Actors Guild
555 Hours Avenue South
Sydney, Australia

Dear Ms. Kidman:

Thank you very much for offering me the job of Marketing Director for the Australian Actors Guild. I enjoyed meeting you and learning more about your organization.

Unfortunately I need to turn down this position at this time due to another opportunity. The salary will be approximately 20% greater and the job will be closer to home – New York, NY versus Sydney, Australia. I appreciate all of your time and effort in reviewing my resume and interviewing me. In particular, I am grateful for Russell Crowe's travel arrangement assistance.

Although the position is not a fit for me at this time, I wish you continued success in your organization and in finding a Marketing Director. Perhaps we will meet again in the future to work on another project together.

Again, thank you for the interview and your consideration.

Respectfully,
Cameron Crowe
Cameron Crowe

First Paragraph

Thank the company for their time, consideration, and offer.

Second Paragraph

Be polite, but firmly reject the offer. Give reasons why you turned the offer down. Discuss the positive impressions of the company. You might mention interviews that you had with company representatives, information you learned about the company during the application process, and any specific people who were helpful or kind to you during the process.

Third Paragraph

Close the letter by mentioning the possibility of future contact with the company. Remain optimistic and thankful that the company considered your application.