

WRITING PROFESSIONAL APPLICATION LETTERS

adapted from SIUC Career Services, "Composing A Cover Letter" and Mike Markel's *Technical Communication: Situations and Strategies*

Tips for Writing a Cover or Inquiry Letter:

- ✓ Use business letter format. (Single-space with double spaces between paragraphs. Include inside address information—the name, title, organization, and address of the recipient in the left hand corner of the page.)
- ✓ Research the employer's organization and personalize each letter. This indicates that you know something about the company and that you are interested in the employer.
- ✓ Keep your cover letter brief. In most cases, the cover letter should fill the better part of a page. For more experienced candidates, the letter may be longer, but most students find that they can adequately describe their credentials in one page. Be sure not to waste the reader's time.
- ✓ Use a polite, formal style, which demonstrates both self-confidence and respect for the employer. Be clear, objective, and persuasive.
- ✓ Briefly highlight one or two of your most significant accomplishments or abilities to show you are an above average candidate.
- ✓ Use powerful action verbs to hold the employer's interest and convey a sense of energy and enthusiasm.
- ✓ Group similar items together in a paragraph and then organize the paragraphs to relate logically. Use strong topic sentences to tie information together in an organized fashion.
- ✓ Close the letter with a plan for follow-up action. Ask for an interview to further discuss your qualifications for the position.
- ✓ Include an enclosure notation to indicate that your résumé follows the letter.
- ✓ Thank the reader for their time in reading your letter and résumé and for considering you as an applicant.
- ✓ Proofread and sign your letter.
- ✓ When unsure if the position is available

SAMPLE COVER LETTER FORMAT

Your street address
City, State Zip
Date

Name
Title
Company
Street Address
City, State Zip

Dear Mr./Ms:

1st paragraph—Explain why you are writing; identify the position and your source of information. Indicate in summary form your strongest qualifications for the position using a series of phrases.

2nd paragraph—Outline your strongest qualifications in more detail and show how they match the position requirements. As much as possible, provide evidence of your related work, extracurricular, and academic experiences and accomplishments. Refer to your enclosed résumé.

3rd paragraph—Optional. Convince the employer that you have the personal qualities and motivation to succeed. Relate your interests and qualities to your knowledge of the company.

4th paragraph—Request an interview and indicate how and when you can be contacted. Suggest that you will call at a specific time to discuss interview possibilities. Thank the reader for his/her consideration.

Sincerely,

(Handwritten signature)

Your name typed

Enclosure