

# Cover Letter Writing Guide

Each time you send your resume to a company or organization for an internship or job opportunity, you must send it with a cover letter. The cover letter introduces you, tells why you are writing, and encourages the employer to read your resume. **A well-written cover letter is just as important as a well-developed resume.**

## TWO TYPES OF COVER LETTERS

1. **Letters of Application** - Written when you know the actual job you are applying for.
2. **Letters of Inquiry** - Written when you are unaware of a specific job, but are inquiring as to possible openings. You need to be specific about what kind of position you are seeking. The employer will not decide for you.

## FOUR QUESTIONS A COVER LETTER MUST ANSWER TO BE EFFECTIVE

**Paragraph #1:** *Why are you writing?* Be concise and clear about what position or what kind of position you are interested in and how you learned about it.

**Paragraph #2:** *Why does this position/company interest me?* This part of your cover letter should be tailored to the individual company/organization that you are applying to. What attracts you to this organization? Why do you want to work for them? You may need to do some homework to find out more about the organization to write this paragraph. Visit the organization's website to learn who they are, their mission statement, services they provide, etc.

**Paragraph #3:** *Why are you the best candidate for the position?* Why should I hire you? Sell yourself! Describe special skills and accomplishments that will make you an asset to the company/organization. Make specific connections between the position you are applying for and your experience and education. Be specific, give examples.

**Final Paragraph:** *What is the next step?* Let the employer/organization know you will be contacting him/her regarding the possibility of an interview whenever this is possible. Be proactive.

## GUIDELINES

**Each letter:**

- **MUST BE ORIGINAL!** Do not send out a generic letter. Your cover letter should be tailored to a specific organization and/or available position.
- **MUST USE KEY WORDS THAT ALIGN WITH POSITION DESCRIPTION!**
- **MUST BE IN STANDARD BUSINESS LETTER FORMAT! (See page 3.)** Your letter should include the date, a heading, inside address, greeting, body, closing, and signature.
- **SHOULD BE SENT TO A SPECIFIC PERSON!** This ensures that the letter and resume will end up on the right person's desk and enables an easy follow-up on your part because you know who received the correspondence. A specific name will also help you to personalize it appropriately.

If you do not have the individual's name, call the company/organization and ask the receptionist. The following request may be used as a model to obtain your own information. "I am sending a correspondence to your Director of Sales. Would you please give me the correct spelling of his/her name and also the official job title? Thank you."

If for some reason you cannot obtain this person's name, address the letter to the person's job title (e.g. Director of Personnel) and use their title in your greeting. Also, when in doubt, use Ms. when greeting a woman.

- **MUST BE TYPED!** Be sure that no typographical, spelling, or grammatical errors are present. Many employers will not consider applicants if such errors exist. A haphazard attempt



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## **GUIDELINES** *(continued)*

### **Each letter:**

- **SHOULD BE BRIEF!** (no more than one page), yet factual and professional. Avoid clichés, wordiness, and pushiness.
- **IF SUBMITTING HARD COPIES, COVER LETTER AND RESUME SHOULD BE PRINTED ON RESUME PAPER!** Resume paper is available in Career Development Office.
- **ELECTRONIC COVER LETTERS AND RESUMES SHOULD BE SAVED AS PDFs**

## **FOLLOW UP**

**BE SURE TO FOLLOW UP ANY APPLICATION OR INQUIRY.** If you have not heard from the company or organization one to two weeks since sending your resume or shortly after the closing date, then follow-up with a phone call. This allows you to know the status of your application, show the employer your initiative and interest, and puts you in control of your internship or job search. Don't call the contact person more than once during the same week. Find out the decision timetable during the first call and follow-through accordingly.



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# Cover Letter Format

Month Date, Year

Recipient Name  
Organization  
Address  
City, Street, Zip Code

Dear (Recipient Name):

**Paragraph One:** Why are you writing?  
Be clear about the position you want and how you learned about it.

**Paragraph Two:** Why does this position and/or company interest you?  
What attracts you to this organization? Why do you want to work for them?  
DO YOUR RESEARCH!

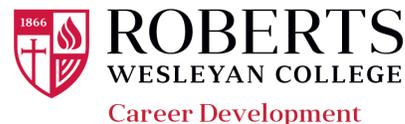
**Paragraph Three:** Why are you the best candidate for the position?  
What are the skills, accomplishments, and assets that you bring to this organization?  
Give specific examples: Make connections between your education/experience and the requirements of the position.

**Paragraph Four:** What is the next step?  
Take the initiative: let the employer know that you will contact him/her (and when!) about possibly setting up an interview.

Sincerely,

***NOTE: IF YOU CAN GET YOUR SIGNATURE SCANNED AND INSERTED HERE ... THAT IS ALWAYS A NICE TOUCH.***

Your full name as it appears in your header



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# Letter of Inquiry

Month Date, Year

Recipient Name  
Organization  
Address  
City, Street, ZIP CODE

Dear (Recipient Name):

I am writing to inquire about positions that may be available in the Finance Department at (insert name of company/organization). In May, I will be graduating from Roberts Wesleyan College with a Bachelor of Science in Accounting and Information Management.

When researching companies in the Rochester area, your organization continued to emerge as one of the top firms in the region to work for. Your history in the Rochester area, along with your excellent reputation and commitment to client service is the type of environment in which I hope to begin my professional career. I am extremely interested in an opportunity to contribute to the firm.

During my 4 years at Roberts Wesleyan College, I had a variety of experiences that provided me with the opportunity to learn and work. As a student intern, I worked closely with the Director of Finance at Catholic Family Center. In this position I reviewed intercompany transactions, prepared comparative financial statements, and constructed graphs for analysis. I believe this accounting experience, my organizational skills, and academic accounting preparation will allow me to contribute to the work at (insert name of company/organization) while providing quality customer service to clients.

I would like to further discuss my qualifications with you. I know I would be an asset to your organization and can be reached at (585) 555-1111. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

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# Letter of Application

Month Date, Year

Recipient Name  
Organization  
Address  
City, Street, Zip Code

Dear (Recipient Name):

I have enclosed my resume and application materials for the elementary teaching position at (insert name of company/organization) posted on Handshake. In May I will be graduating from Roberts Wesleyan College with a Bachelor of Science degree in Inclusive Childhood Education with a 7-9 extension in Social Studies.

This past spring, I had the opportunity to complete my student teaching in your school district and I was impressed by the professional and caring attitude of the faculty, staff, and administrators at (insert name of company/organization). I was impressed that the district has established a strong mentoring program for new teachers. It is this commitment on behalf of your faculty and administrators that makes teaching at (insert name of company/organization) so appealing to me as a candidate. It is also evident from the research I have done that your students are excelling in all of the New York state standards and the district is truly committed to excellence. I believe I would fit nicely into this type of environment.

During my student teaching experience, I had the opportunity to work at both the elementary and middle school levels. These experiences allowed me to not only lead entire class instruction, but to also work with students in individual and small group settings. As a teacher, I value creativity and individuality and try to use a variety of teaching strategies as well as hands on activities to meet the diverse needs of students. I am a caring individual, with strong organizational and communication skills. My goal as a teacher is to develop a safe, challenging and creative learning environment for my students.

I believe that I would be an asset to your school district. I look forward to discussing my skills at an upcoming interview and can be reached at (585) 555-5555. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

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