



## JOB SEARCH CORRESPONDENCE (Cover Letters & Thank You Letters)

*Although these suggestions are general and widely applicable, there are exceptions to every rule. Whether you are developing a cover letter for the first time or writing one for a new opportunity, we highly recommend and welcome you to visit the Career Center for a consultation and critique with one of our career counselors.*

### COVER LETTERS

The purpose of a cover letter is to encourage an employer to review your resume and consider you for an interview. Therefore, a cover letter should **always** accompany your resume.

Rather than restating your resume, your cover letter should emphasize unique qualifications and personal characteristics that are relevant to that particular organization or job opportunity. A good cover letter should explicitly address **what you can do for the organization**, not what it can do for you. The most effective way to do this is to research everything possible about the organization.

*When writing in direct response to a position opening:*

- Mention where or how you found out about the opening.
- Address the requirements of the position – use similar language to the job description.

*When writing a targeted approach letter:*

- State your purpose clearly – whether you are writing to gain advice on your career plans, obtain occupational information, or discuss future work possibilities.

Cover letters should typically be **one page with 3-4 paragraphs** (although there are exceptions). They should be printed on the same high-quality paper as your resume for a consistent, professional appearance. Below are guidelines on what to include:

Address, Date, and Salutation:

- Your address and date at the top of the page
- Name, professional title, and address of the person/organization to whom you are writing
- Formal salutation: “Dear Mr. / Ms. \_\_\_\_\_ : “ **You should address your letter to a specific person**, not the generic “To Whom It May Concern.” (If this information was not provided, simply call the organization and ask for the name of the person in charge of hiring or consult the website.)

Opening Paragraph:

- Begin by stating the purpose of the letter, not introducing yourself.
- Tell the employer how you heard about the position/organization (Career Center, news media, alumni).
- If you have previously met the employer, this is the place to remind him/her (i.e., “After speaking with you at the UNC Asheville Career Fair ... ”)

Second Paragraph:

- Research who the organization is serving, how it performs compared to competitors, what current trends affect that industry.
- **Answer the question “Why do you want to work for this company/organization/employer?”** (Show that you’ve done company research!)
- Indicate why you are interested in the organization, its products or services and the position.

Third Paragraph (can use a 4<sup>th</sup> paragraph if needed):

- **Answer the question “Why are you qualified for the position?”** (What unique attributes can you offer?)
- Describe how you will relate your previous skills and experience to the requirements of the position/benefit of the employer.
- Provide specific examples to support your qualifications. Indicate how your work and field experiences/internship experiences, research projects, volunteer activities, extracurricular background and career aspirations relate to the position and the organization’s interests and goals.
- Bulleting how your qualifications match their needs is often an effective method to use here.

Final Paragraph:

- **Arrange to follow up with the employer** on the status of your application/inquiry.
- Invite him/her to contact you should additional information be needed.
- Indicate your desire for a personal interview and your flexibility as to the time and place. For example, you may indicate that you will be in the city where the organization is located on a certain date.
- Repeat your phone number and/or e-mail in the letter.
- Thank the employer for his/her time and consideration.
- Formal closing: “Sincerely,” with your name signed and typed.

**FINAL CHECKLIST**

\_\_\_\_\_ Cover letter is in standard business letter format (one-inch margins, see two sample formats attached).

\_\_\_\_\_ Design your letter to be work-centered and employer-centered, not “me” centered. Focus on what you can do for them instead of what you want from the organization.

\_\_\_\_\_ **Your enthusiasm for the opportunity is conveyed clearly.**

\_\_\_\_\_ **You sound confident that you are the best candidate.**

\_\_\_\_\_ **Cover letter is written in your own style, using your own words.**

\_\_\_\_\_ Colloquial language and clichés have been avoided.

\_\_\_\_\_ Cover letter does not read like a form letter or a letter sent to multiple employers.

\_\_\_\_\_ You have remembered to sign the letter.

\_\_\_\_\_ You and someone else have checked your letter for spelling, grammar, and punctuation.

\_\_\_\_\_ Your cover letter, resume, and any other application materials are placed unfolded in an 8 ½ by 11 envelope.

**Sample letter in response to a position opening:**

10 College Street  
Our Town, NC 12345  
January 25, 2006

Mr. Jim Smith, Sports Editor  
Our Town Times  
123 Newspaper Lane  
Our Town, NC 12345

Dear Mr. Smith:

I was excited to see the opening for a copy-editor for the *Our Town Times* posted on UNC Asheville's Career Center Online Postings. A native of Our Town and avid reader of the *Times*, I have been looking for an opportunity to work for your paper. The focus of your paper on education and community building is of particular interest to me as an individual that regularly volunteers with a variety of local nonprofit organizations.

I believe my significant experience working on publications makes me an ideal fit for the position of copy-editor. My interest in the press began in high school when I began my own publication, which I self publish to this day. While in college, I worked as a sports writer for the school paper, *The Blue Banner*, and served as sports editor in my final semester. I found the job fulfilling and was able to fine tune my skills in reporting and editing.

Not only do I have experience copy-editing for the school paper, I also completed a copy-editing internship at *Living Magazine*, where my careful approach was highly valued. Additionally, I have a strong work ethic. I graduated with distinction from The University of North Carolina Asheville with a Bachelor of Arts in Mass Communication while working 15 hours per week.

I would be a loyal employee to your newspaper and am eager for the opportunity to meet with you. I will contact you the week of January 19<sup>th</sup> to follow up on my application. In the meantime, I can be reached at (123) 456-7890 or [ijobseeker@aol.com](mailto:ijobseeker@aol.com).

Thank you for your time and consideration. I look forward to speaking with you soon.

Sincerely,

*Ima Jobseeker*

Ima Jobseeker

**Sample targeted job approach letter:**

August 1, 2005

130 Career Street  
Asheville, NC 28804

Ms. Jane Doe, Marketing Coordinator  
The Best Employer, Inc.  
360 Employment Lane  
Asheville, NC 28803

Dear Ms. Doe:

Ms. Anne Jones suggested that I contact you regarding the possibility of employment within the marketing department of The Best Employer, Inc. In December, I will graduate with a Bachelor of Science in Management with a concentration in Marketing from The University of North Carolina Asheville.

I believe my education and experience would be a perfect match for the new initiatives Ms. Jones described to me. In particular, your desire to concentrate on an international market is one of my interests as I studied abroad for a semester in Madrid, Spain. While in Spain I was not only engrossed in the culture, but I also focused my coursework on international marketing techniques. Additionally, I was able to fine tune my language skills and feel comfortable with the speaking and writing the Spanish language.

This summer I have been an intern for Networking, Inc. I developed a customer satisfaction survey and used the results to come up with recommendations for improving customer service. I will formally present this project at the next board meeting. My major coursework has also involved creating several marketing plans that targeted regional, national, and international markets. These can be viewed at [www.sallysample.com](http://www.sallysample.com).

I am excited to learn more about how I could contribute to The Best Employer's success. I will follow up with you next week in regards to the status of my application. In the meantime, you may reach me by phone (828) 251-0000 or by email at [ssample@aol.com](mailto:ssample@aol.com). Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

*Sally Sample*

Sally Sample

**Sample targeted internship approach letter:**

March 15, 2006

24 Sunset Drive  
Anywhere, NC 28804

Ms. Liz Employer, Executive Director  
Universal Wilderness Association  
P.O. Box 00000  
Anytown, WY 82801

Dear Ms. Howell:

After our meeting in January, I am excited about the possibility of working with you for the summer. I am writing to officially apply for the summer intern position that you are offering.

I believe strongly in the wilderness preservation ethic of the Universal Wilderness Association. As a Wyoming native and avid outdoor enthusiast, I have particularly strong values and concerns for the future of Wyoming's wild lands. I want to strive to protect them. My experiences and abilities are perfectly suited to the intern position and I would work well with the UWA.

My experiences with Outward Bound, as well as numerous personal outings, have provided me with the wilderness skills needed to be effective in the field. I am able to navigate with a map and compass in very remote areas and have the physical ability to hike for sustained periods. My internship with the Transportation Coordinator at the University of North Carolina Asheville has also strengthened my map skills. As an intern, my duties included mapping various amenities around campus, as well as verifying the accuracy of existing maps. In addition, my college courses have given me knowledge of the formation, enactment, and enforcement of the environmental policies and management regimes with which the WWA directly and indirectly works.

I am excited about the opportunity to put my skills to work for the Universal Wilderness Association this summer. I will be in touch throughout the rest of the semester. You can reach me at (504) 555-5944 or by email at [jobseeker@bulldog.unca.edu](mailto:jobseeker@bulldog.unca.edu). Thank you for considering me as a candidate for the internship.

Sincerely,

*David Jobseeker*

David Jobseeker

## THANK YOU LETTERS

Thank you letters should be sent promptly (within 24 hours) after an interview. They do not need to be lengthy or elaborate but should convey enthusiasm and professionalism.

Besides a formal expression of appreciation for the opportunity to meet with the interviewer, a thank you letter enhances the effectiveness of your job search by:

- Indicating your **continued interest** in the position/organization
- Reiterating key issues discussed during the interview
- Reminding the interviewer of your **relevant qualifications** and skills
- Emphasizing that you are looking forward to the employer's favorable consideration of your candidacy

You should also send a thank you letter 1) after informational interviews, 2) if you are withdrawing from consideration for a position/turning down a job offer, and 3) in reference to a rejection (letters sent under these circumstances increase your chances of a favorable outcome in the future).

Thank you letters should be hand-written on a professional card/stationary or in standard business letter format on high-quality paper. Make your decision based on the type of organization and the relationship you develop with the interviewer(s). As with resumes and cover letters, be sure you have proofread your letter for spelling, grammar, and punctuation errors.

Only choose to e-mail your thank you notes to an employer if you know they are making a very quick decision. If you choose to email the thank you, be sure to send the letter as an attachment to the email. In addition, follow up with a hard copy immediately.

Sample thank you letter:

July 16, 2004

Dear Ms. Johnson:

Thank you for meeting with me on Thursday, July 15 to discuss the position of outdoor educator with Camp Sunshine. Everything I learned from your staff confirmed that this is exactly the type of opportunity I am seeking.

I was especially excited to hear that Camp Sunshine is beginning a day program for children ages 5-7. As we discussed, I am confident that my experience with that age group would be a great asset to you. I have already brainstormed a few ideas for some short fieldtrips.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to talk with you and tour your site. I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Sincerely,

*John Doe*

John Doe

**Updated June 17, 2008**