

Letters You'll Need To Write During Your Job Search:

Cover letters, Thank you letters, Offer acceptance/decline letters

Creating a Winning Cover Letter

A cover letter is a vital tool in marketing yourself to prospective employers for several reasons:

- An effective cover letter will draw attention to your qualifications and experiences that are most relevant to the position for which you are applying.
- Employers often use letters to assess the written communication skills that you will need for any position.
- A letter provides you the opportunity to convey to a potential employer your interest, enthusiasm, and other personal attributes that are not easily expressed in a resume alone.

Cover letters can play an important role in helping you gain interviews through on-Grounds interviewing and your own off-Grounds search. For these reasons, it is important that you prepare your written job search correspondence with as much care as you used when constructing your resume.

When should I send a cover letter?

Pay attention to times when you need to send a cover letter to a potential employer or contact. If you are conducting an on-Grounds job search a cover letter may not always be required. It is important to note that unless requested, cover letters cannot be submitted through the CAVLink system. If you are conducting an off-Grounds job search, sending a cover letter will provide the employer with helpful information to complement the resume. A cover letter can convey your interest and indicate that you are a “match” for the position.

What should my cover letter say?

- Why you are writing and how you learned about the organization or opportunity
- Why you are interested
- Why you are qualified and would be a good “match” for the position
- How you plan to follow up with the employer
- Do not restate what is on your resume
- Emphasize personal attributes/strengths related to qualifications for the position

How do I begin to compose the letter?

Use your own words! Resist the temptation to compose your letter simply by replacing a few words in the attached samples. Remember, the purpose of your letter is to showcase your individual strengths and your own written communication skills. Use the sample as a guide, but be unique.

To whom should the cover letter be addressed?

If possible, address the cover letter to a specific person, not “Dear Sir/Madam” or “To Whom It May Concern.” If contact information is not available on CAVLink, use a position title (e.g. Dear Internship Coordinator or Dear Recruitment Manager). Make sure to use current information.

How long is a cover letter?

Cover letters should not exceed four paragraphs or one page in length. They should be clear and use concise sentences and short paragraphs. Use proper business format when constructing your cover letter.

Cover Letter Tips - How to Send an Email Cover Letter

When you apply via email, there are a couple of options. You can write your cover letter directly into an email message (the same rules for writing a proper letter and proofing it apply) and attach your resume. Or, you can attach both your resume and letter, as separate documents to the email address. Send yourself a copy, as well (use the bcc: field in your email program). That way you'll have a copy for your records. When you send your cover letter in the body of the email address be sure to include your contact information (email address, phone number, etc.) in your signature, so it's easy for the hiring manager to get in touch with you. The most important part of sending an email cover letter is to follow the employer's instructions. If the job posting says to include your cover letter and resume as an attachment, attach Microsoft Word or Adobe PDF files to your email message. Save the files with your name, so they don't get mixed up with other applicant's materials. Be sure to include a Subject Line in your email with the position for which you are applying and your name. Include a signature with all your contact information - name, address, phone, and email address, so it's easy for the hiring manager to get in touch with you.

Proof Read

Again. Using a spell checker is not enough. Many recruiters will dismiss even the most qualified candidate if there is one typo in a cover letter or resume. Reread your letter two or three times, and then give it to someone else who is a strong writer to review. Even if your letter is free of typos, poor grammar also makes a bad impression.

Sample Format for a Cover Letter

Your Street Address
City, State, Zip
Date

Contact Person's Name
Position Title
Company
Address
City, State, Zip

Dear Mr./Ms. _____:

In the first paragraph, indicate why you are writing and where you heard about the position. Make sure to include the specific position title for which you are applying. If an individual or personal contact referred you to the organization, be sure to mention the name in the first or second sentence. Then provide a brief explanation of your interest that reflects your research into the organization. Keep the first paragraph brief and attention grabbing.

In one or two paragraphs, detail how you can contribute to the company. Show how your qualifications, skills, and attributes will benefit the firm. Make sure not to reproduce your resume in this space, but highlight your most pertinent experiences. If you have access to a position description or job listing, specifically address how your background matches the qualifications they are seeking. You might even list your qualifications in the same order that the criteria were listed in the job description. Your objectives here are to demonstrate that you are a “match” for the position and to stimulate enough interest that the contact person will want to read your resume. Create a “need” for yourself at the company, and indicate your willingness to contribute to the organization.

In the closing paragraph, you should suggest the next step. If this is an off-Grounds opportunity, mention your desire to arrange an interview. Indicate that you will call at a particular time, usually within two weeks, and then follow up. Thank the person for his/her time and consideration of your credentials.

Sincerely,

(Signature) Full Name

Sample Cover Letter for Internship

205 14th Street, Apt #8
Charlottesville, VA 22903
December 5, 2011

Brittanie Bosselait
University Recruiting
Booz | Allen | Hamilton
8283 Greensboro Drive
McLean, VA 22102

NOTE: If an employer has a name that men or women may use (e.g., Alex), you may wish to begin your letter “Dear Alex Smith” instead of “Dear Mr. Smith” in case Alex is a woman. A former female UVA career counselor named Alex often received emails from students, faculty, and recruiters addressed to “Mr.” – do not make the same mistake!

Dear Ms. Bosselait:

Thank you for taking the time to speak with me at the Diversity Career Fair and for all of the information you shared about Booz|Allen|Hamilton during the information session that you hosted On-Grounds at the University of Virginia. I am writing to apply for an internship with Booz|Allen|Hamilton during the summer of 2012 and appreciate you encouraging me to do so. I believe my business and internship experience along with my strong academic performance has prepared me for such an opportunity and will allow me the chance to contribute as an intern in a highly effective and professional manner.

I am currently pursuing a double major in Systems Engineering and Economics and a minor in Engineering Business. Viewing your internship request, I learned that you are seeking academically successful engineers with a business background. I am confident that I have both the strong academics and pertinent business experience that you are

Sample Cover Letter for Internship, continued

seeking. I have worked for three summers and most recently, I served as an Intern in the SAP Procurement & Materials Team with Kellogg Brown & Root (KBR), a global engineering firm. My internship culminated in the presentation of my summer-long research project, focused on business analysis of real-time reporting of e-commerce activity, to an array of upper management. As such, I believe I can provide the communication and presentation skills you desire along with strong analytical abilities.

Attached is my resume for review. Please feel free to contact me at (xxx) xxx-xxxx or by e-mail at xxxxxx@virginia.edu if you have any questions or if you would like additional credentials in support of my application. Thank you for your time and serious consideration, I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Nate Hopke

Sample Cover Letter for Full-Time

583 University Avenue
Charlottesville, VA 22903
Email address

January 17, 2011

Mr. Garret M. Hansen
Lucent Technologies Network Systems GmbH
90411 Nuremberg
Germany

Dear Mr. Hansen:

I am writing to apply for Lucent's Marketing Associate position in Nuremberg, Germany. I became aware of this opportunity through the University of Virginia's Center for Engineering Career Development, and I believe I have the skills as well as the enthusiasm to work for the Customer Centre in Germany.

I am currently a fourth-year electrical engineering student, and will graduate from the University of Virginia in May of 2012. By viewing your supplementary information and Lucent's website, I learned that you are seeking candidates with strong presentation and technical abilities. I am confident that I have the background and skills you are seeking. Having a strong technical background, working for the UVA Solar Airship Program, and GE Financial Assurance, I am able to present technical information to both engineering and non-technical personnel. Academically, I have presented both my thesis proposal and my thesis technical report to my peers and my professor. With the Airship Program, I have presented formal and informal presentations not only to the team members, but also to other students and to faculty members. I also created PowerPoint presentations for one of GE's projects. In addition, I have further developed my management skills as the VP of Engineering of the UVA Solar Airship Program (2010). I managed the different engineering teams and helped set the team's short and long term goals. I also worked closely with the VP of Business to determine the team's budget and helped with fundraising and advertising.

Attached is my resume for review. I hope to join your team in Germany. If you have any questions, please contact me at (xxx) xxx-xxxx or email me at hoos03@virginia.edu. Thank you for your time and I look forward in meeting you in April.

Sincerely,

Jefferson Cavalier

Sample Cover Letter for Full-Time

September 22, 2011

Human Resources Department
International Truck and Engine Corporation

Dear Human Resources Manager:

I am a senior Mechanical Engineering student at the University of Virginia. I am emailing you because I am very interested in a full-time entry-level position with International Truck and Engine Corporation. I have had a strong interest in the automotive community ever since my father first took me out to the garage to work on our vehicles. My current project vehicle is a 1986 K5 Blazer. While at UVA, my largest project has been the SAE Mini Baja Competition, and I am the President of our team here. We utilize SolidWorks and COSMOS for our modeling and analysis of our frame and suspension components so I am very familiar with these programs.

I first learned of International Truck and Engine Corporation through my father, who drove a tractor trailer for years. He would tell me about all the different types of tractors, who made their engines, and which ones were the best. I later saw advertisements on television for the International Power Stroke Diesel and as I come to a close in my college career I realized that I should further my research into your company. I read on your website that you are a fairly large company with many different disciplines, which truly excited me. The ability to see multiple different aspects of a project and how they interact with each other is very important for younger engineers to gain experience with project management. Through my work on the SAE Baja cars, I have had the ability to manage multiple different teams and integrate their designs into one complete vehicle. Also, as the lead of one of those teams, I have had the opportunity to design, analyze, and fabricate multiple components and then incorporate them into a finalized car.

This past summer, I was granted an internship position with NASA under the USRP program. In this position, I conducted multiple CFD analyses using CFDDesign. The skills which I gained from using this program would be immensely useful for setting up and analyzing intake flow rates and exhaust flow rates and EGT's via the heat transfer capabilities. I also created multiple CAD drawings of mounting brackets for experimental equipment to fly on a DC-8 aircraft.

Attached, please find a copy of my resume. I will be contacting you in the coming weeks to discuss further opportunities within your company. Please feel free to contact me at (xxx) xxx-xxxx or by email at xxxxx@virginia.edu if you have any questions. Thank you for your time and serious consideration.

Sincerely,

Brian Steeves

Sample Letter to Alumni Requesting Assistance

108 Dabney Station
Charlottesville, VA 22904

January 29, 2001

John J. Employer
ABC Internet Company
1234 Main Street
Anytown, VA 33333

Dear Mr. Employer,

I received your name from the Hoosonline.com UCAN database through the School of Engineering and Applied Science at the University of Virginia. I am seeking an internship in the field of computer engineering in order to gain hands-on experience to compliment my academic background. I am very interested in this field, I would greatly appreciate any suggestions or advice that you can offer me at this time

As a first year student in the School of Engineering and Applied Science at UVa, I have had the opportunity and challenge of juggling the demands of the engineering curriculum. I have learned a lot about time management, working in groups, and the general field of engineering. In addition, I have further developed my problem solving and analytical skills.

Sample Letter to Alumni Requesting Assistance, continued

If by chance, I could have the opportunity to exchange emails with you to get your advice on careers, and how I might go about getting some quality work experience, that would great. If you wish to reach me, my number is (xxx) xxx-xxxx and my email address is xxxxx@virginia.edu. Thank you in advance for your time.

Sincerely,

Mary Cavalier

Letter of Inquiry about Employment possibilities, email

September 16, 2011

Mr. James Monroe
Lead Recruiter, Biotrek
2222 Lab Way
Fairfax, VA 22206

Dear Mr. Monroe:

I learned of Biotrek through online research using Vault through the Center for Engineering Career Development at the University of Virginia where I am completing my Master's degree in Biomedical Engineering. From my research on your web site, I believe there would be a good fit between my skills and interests and your needs. I am interested in the Senior Research Engineering position upon completion of my degree in May 2012.

Currently, as a graduate student, I am involved with a research team where I have become familiar with magnetic suspension techniques, numerical solution methods, blood-biomaterial interactions, and testing protocols. My work on this research project has also allowed me to develop proficiency working within a cross-functional team to solve complex engineering problems. I am highly self-motivated and have been given substantial latitude in developing my own engineering solutions. I believe, through my research experience and also serving as the Team Lead for my undergraduate senior design project, that I have gained extensive leadership experience and further developed my strong research and problem solving abilities. I feel these skills are an excellent match for your need for a Senior Research Engineer.

I appreciate your consideration of my qualifications for this position. I look forward to hearing from you about the possibility of being considered as a candidate for this opportunity.

Sincerely,

Erin Engineer

Thank You Notes After Interviews

Follow-up with employers is a critical step in the interviewing process. It is important to send a thank you note to employers immediately after the interview. A well-written, timely thank you letter tells an employer something important about your personality—that you are courteous and thoughtful. Thank you letters are used to reconfirm and reinforce your interest in a position. They can also provide a format where you can clarify answers you gave in an interview. E-mail is one appropriate method of sending a thank-you letter, but make sure to use proper business format. Sending a thank you letter via e-mail can be useful for getting your correspondence to an employer quickly, particularly if you expect to hear back from the employer soon after the interview. Additional options include mailing a neatly handwritten thank-you letter on a note card or typing a formal thank-you letter.

General Guidelines

- Always send a thank you letter to people who have spent time interviewing you or providing you with information about careers.
- If more than one person interviewed you, a thank you letter should be addressed to the key decision maker and one to the coordinator of the visit. Both letters may be added to your candidate file, so personalize each letter.
- In your letter to the coordinator, be sure to thank by name each of the individuals with whom you interviewed.
- Reinforce how you see yourself fitting into the organization and satisfying the requirements of the position. Creating a “match” between yourself and the position.
- Although this is a business letter, be personal to the extent that you are comfortable. You may wish to refer to one of the highlights or one of the specific points discussed during the interview; by doing so, you will create a more personal letter and may refresh the interviewer’s memory of you and the interview.
- Keep it brief—no more than one page and three to four paragraphs.
- If you are sending a thank-you letter by mail, make sure to use appropriate stationary.

Sample Thank you letter

7 Chapel Drive
Charlottesville, VA 22903
February 3, 2011

Mr. Dave Ong
College Recruitment
Maximus
777 North Garden Blvd
Arlington, VA 22203

Dear Mr. Ong:

Thank you for the opportunity to interview with you on-Grounds at the University of Virginia on October 28. I appreciate all that you shared about working at Maximus and I also appreciated the time you took to learn about my strengths for this opportunity. I would like to reiterate my interest in working for and contributing to the Maximus team.

After speaking with Sarah Copeland, who interned with your company last summer, attending your company presentation and speaking with you, I have confirmed my belief that Maximus would be a wonderful working environment to learn and grow. Again, thank you for your time and consideration. If you need any additional information, please feel free to contact me. I look forward to hearing from you in the next few weeks.

Sincerely,
Kendra Curry

Dear Ms. Taylor,

Thank you very much for inviting me to interview with Northrop Grumman Sperry Marine Systems for the position of Engineer I – Dept. 260. I thoroughly enjoyed meeting and interviewing with you, Mr. Miller, and Mr. Davis. I appreciated the time you spent getting to know me and my qualifications for this position. While speaking with each of you, I became even more excited about the opportunity and would like to reiterate my interest in working with and contributing to Northrop Grumman Sperry Marine Systems.

Thank you very much, again and I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,
Sean Smith

Accepting or Declining a Job Offer

You have the option of providing written documentation to confirm your acceptance or decline of an offer. Letters responding to offers are used to maintain positive, professional relationships with employers.

General Guidelines

Is it appropriate to call or send a letter first?

Always respond to an offer by telephone first, and then follow up with a letter.

What should an acceptance letter include?

The letter should include basic details such as job title, starting location and date. Other details such as salary, relocation agreement, benefits, and other bonuses should be included in your offer package you receive from the employer.

A statement of appreciation for the opportunity to join the organization and become part of the “team.”

What should a letter declining an offer include?

- A statement of appreciation for the offer
- A reason for declining the offer
- A statement, if appropriate, that leaves the door open for some possible future contact

What format should I use for constructing the letter?

Use proper business format and be brief when constructing an acceptance or decline letter.

Acceptance Letter

Use this letter to accept a job offer. Your letter should confirm the terms of your employment (salary, starting date, hours, benefits etc.). Usually employers will telephone first and discuss the terms of employment. Accepting the offer constitutes a moral (not legal) contract between you and the employer.

Name
Title
Company
Street Address
City, State, Zip

Dear Ms. Bowman:

I am writing to confirm my acceptance of your offer to become an IT Project Manager with IBM. As stated in your offer letter that I received on October 11th, my starting salary will be \$67,525, with an added allowance of \$2,500 for moving expenses to be mailed upon receipt of my acceptance letter. I will report to work on June 1, 2011 in Cooperstown, NY.

I am extremely pleased to be given the opportunity to work for IBM. It will be enjoyable to utilize my analytical skills as well as my electrical engineering background to contribute in professional and measureable ways. I look forward to contributing to the IT Team.

Thank you for your consideration in working with me during the recruiting process. My positive experience is one of the major factors in my decision to accept your offer. I look forward to being on your team.

Sincerely,

Mike Howell

Letter Declining a Job Offer

Dear Mr. Gerald:

Thank you for your kind offer to become a Project Manager with Celanese. As I mentioned over the telephone, I regret that I have to decline the offer. It was a very difficult decision but, I have decided to take a position with another organization.

I am very impressed with Celanese and the company's commitment to customer service. You and all of the individuals with whom I met during my visit treated me with great consideration and respect. I truly am honored to have been selected for a position. As I continue in my career, I hope to keep the lines of communication open with your company.

Thank you again for your offer, and I hope to have the opportunity to see you in the future.

Sincerely,

Jim Sanders

Name

Title

Company

Street Address

City, State, Zip

Dear Mr./Ms.:

Thank you for your offer to become a Summer Intern with Company X. As I mentioned over the phone, I regret that I have to decline the offer. For the summer, I have chosen to take a position with another company closer to my home in Alexandria, VA.

I appreciated your interest in me, and I enjoyed meeting you and the rest of the Company X team. As I continue in my job search this coming fall for a permanent position, I hope to remain in contact with you and your company.

Thank you again for your time and interest, and I hope to have the opportunity to see you in the future.

Sincerely,