

## COVER LETTERS

The cover letter provides you with an opportunity to introduce yourself and state your objective, personalize your resume, and highlight information that addresses the needs and interests of the employer. Bear in mind that letters you write not only convey your interest and qualifications, but also give the employer an opportunity to observe your attentiveness to detail, spelling, grammar, and the overall quality of your written communication. *Flaws in your letters will often be interpreted as flaws in your qualifications.*

### Address

City, ST Zip Code  
Date

Name  
Title  
Company/Organization Name  
Address  
City, ST Zip Code

Dear Mr./Ms. Last Name:

### Opening Paragraph:

*What is your intent in writing this letter? What position are you applying for and how did you learn about it?*

Briefly introduce yourself, your major, and the degree anticipated. If you are aware of a specific opening, refer to it. If you are not aware of a specific position, state your area of interest. This paragraph can also be used to refer to the individual who recommended that you contact the organization, or other factors that prompted you to write. If possible, convey why you are interested in the organization and anything you know about their product or service.

### Second Paragraph:

*What are your qualifications? Why do you want to work for this organization? What would you enjoy doing for them? Sell yourself and be brief. Whet the employer's appetite so that he/she will want to read your resume and schedule an interview.*

Describe highlights from your background that would be of greatest interest to the organization. Focus on skills, activities, accomplishments, and past experience you can contribute to the organization and its work. If possible, demonstrate that you know something about the organization and industry/field. Use action verbs that describe relevant skills and expertise you can contribute. Mention specific knowledge you may have such as computer applications, foreign languages, lab techniques, writing and editing capabilities. You are attempting to create a match or "notion of fit" between the employer's hiring needs and your interests, experience, and skills.

### Third Paragraph:

*What is your plan of action? Do you want to follow up with a phone call or do you want them to contact you?*

Close your letter by stating that you would like to discuss employment opportunities or other information with the individual and that you will call to follow up on your letter. This demonstrates your initiative and follow-through and will help you maintain some control of your efforts.

*Other points that can be made in the last paragraph:*

- Express your willingness to provide additional information
- State a specific time when you will follow up by phone or email
- Let them know if and when you are going to visit their area
- Thank the person receiving your letter for their time and interest

Most importantly, remember to address the cover letter to a person. If you do not have a name, call the department or human resources to find out to whom your letter should be addressed. As a last resort, address your letter to the personnel manager, hiring manager, or recruiting representative.

Sincerely,  
Your First Name and Last Name

- *Resumes are only as good as the letter accompanying them. So make sure that you spend some time on your letter and direct it to the appropriate person.*
- *What you write and how you write it tells potential employers a great deal about your professionalism, competence, and personality.*
- *In a job search aimed at business and professional circles, proper procedures and communication etiquette are important.*
- *A cover letter should entice an employer to want to take action on your resume. It should persuade the employer to invite you for a job interview.*

## TIPS FOR CREATING AN EFFECTIVE COVER LETTER

- Collect your thoughts. Your ideas may not come out logically or sequentially, but write them down. Don't judge and evaluate, simply collect them.
- Spend time on your letter. As the adage goes, "With part-time effort, you get part-time results."
- Write a draft, let it cool off overnight, and then rewrite if necessary.
- Use a strong close, e.g., "After you have had an opportunity to review this letter, I will call you..." Avoid weak endings such as "I look forward to your reply" or "Please call me at your earliest convenience."
- Limit your letter to one page; a letter is an opportunity to sell, so say something about you, while also focusing on the needs of the employer. Write the way you talk. It should be well-worded, concise, and controlled in the use of the pronoun "I".
- While a general cover letter can be used, best results come from personalizing each letter to fit the specific circumstances, position, or organization.
- Ask for opinions, advice, and feedback from friends, a counselor, or someone in the profession. Check spelling and grammar.
- Avoid cluttered desktop publishing. Business letters should look conservative. If you want to be creative, do so in your choice of words. It should be aesthetically appealing with careful attention to spacing and format. Use letter-quality printer paper or high-quality bond paper. Stick with white, ivory, or off-white.
- Remember to sign it personally and include your telephone number and email address.

- Don't use someone else's letter. If you are using the same letter for several companies, remember to change the name in the body of your letter.
- Devise a system to keep track of the follow-up steps you will take and the responses you receive. Most students have found that binders or file folders for organizing the job search and its correspondence are essential.
- Follow up, follow up. People will call you, but you'll improve your odds dramatically if you follow up your letters with a phone call.
- Don't mark letters "personal and confidential" unless there is a solid reason why a secretary or an administrative assistant can't open them. If your letter is persuasive enough, it will get through.

## COVER LETTERS ONLINE

More and more job seekers are asked to send their resumes and cover letters online. These letters are about half the length of a regular cover letter. It is important to mention in your letter how you found out about the position, what you are looking for, and what you have to offer. You might also mention a few key words the organization might want to hear. Most importantly, be succinct. Most experts recommend that you compose your cover letter off-line first before importing it into an outgoing email message.

## RESOURCES

**Publications available at the Career Resource Center:**

- *Cover Letters That Knock 'em Dead*, Yate
- *201 Dynamite Job Search Letters*, Krannich & Krannich
- *Vault Guide to Resumes, Cover Letters & Interviewing*, Leifman, et al. (available via your Vault Career Insider account at [studentaffairs.stanford.edu/cdc/services/career-library](http://studentaffairs.stanford.edu/cdc/services/career-library)).



## TYPES OF COVER LETTERS

**SAMPLE #1 - Letter of Application in Response to a Job Listing** (This letter accompanies a completed application form or may be used to respond to a specific job listing that requests a letter and resume, and possibly other documentation.)

P.O. Box 000033  
Stanford, CA 94000

October 19, 20XX

Ms. Marian Armstone  
Human Resources Manager  
LEK Consulting  
9999 Oak Street  
Palo Alto, CA 9003

Dear Ms. Armstone:

This letter and the attached resume serve as my application for the Associate position at LEK Consulting. After speaking with Jo Kimmer at Stanford's Career Fair on October 9, I believe my skills, academic training, and work experience are a good fit for this position.

I will complete a Master of Science degree in Mechanical Engineering in June 20XX. I have developed strong analytical and quantitative skills through coursework in technical, computer science, and economics courses. In addition, my hands-on experience in various internships and student leadership positions supports my qualifications as an Associate.

As an intern at General Motors this past summer, I developed analytical skills by taking measurements on a development vehicle identifying design problems, offering solutions for improvement, and making recommendations in a written report. I was awarded a General Motors scholarship for my exceptional contributions as a member of the S-10 Crew Cab launch team.

At Stanford, I demonstrated leadership ability by serving as the elected president for a service organization with over one hundred active members. In this effort, I honed my ability to make good decisions, plan and organize my time, work well on a team, and have developed sound interpersonal, oral, and written communications skills. Finally, I bring an entrepreneurial spirit and creativity to this position, as evidenced by my experience designing, patenting, and marketing my own product.

I would enjoy speaking with you further to discuss, in detail, how I am a match for the Associate position. I will follow up in two weeks to see if there is additional information you would like me to provide or answer questions you may have (another option: I am eager to apply my energy, experience, and enthusiasm to the work of LEK and look forward to hearing from you soon.).

Sincerely,

*John Duncan*

John Duncan

## SAMPLE #2 - Letter of Application in Response to an Internship Listing

### Andrea Abre

12345 First Street | Palo Alto, CA 94305 | 650.555.1234 | andreaabre@stanford.edu

Jonson Inc.  
123 Fifth Avenue  
New York, NY 10019

Dear Hiring Manager:

I am writing to apply for your summer intern position posted on JonsonInc.com. I have experience in fashion journalism through my work with the online magazine *One Line to You* and have a background in event planning through my work as a Marketing Intern this past summer. Currently, I am a junior at Stanford University studying Communication and International Relations and I plan to pursue a career in fashion upon graduation. Jonson would be a great springboard in achieving that goal.

My passion for fashion and art comes from my grandmother who was a fabric designer in New York during the 1940s and 50s. From her, I learned a great deal about color and design. Since the age of 10, I have been consumed by the industry and have studied *Vogue*, *Harper's Bazaar* and *Elle* magazines. In addition, I analyze and examine the work of designers and follow fashion critics like Suzy Menkes. After beginning to write for the online magazine, *One Line to You*, I had the opportunity to parlay my depth of knowledge into written pieces about various aspects of the fashion world. My expression through this medium also allowed me to further my education of the industry.

I believe the marketing internship at the San Francisco Symphony best prepared me for the responsibilities of an intern at Jonson. In this position I was trusted with a great deal of responsibility. I wrote newsletters, researched artists to compile performance programs, helped with event planning, ran errands, composed press releases and edited and proof-read written material. Through these tasks I learned the importance of being thorough while working in a fast-paced environment. My attention to detail and organization allowed me to thrive in this context and they will do the same at Jonson.

After reviewing Jonson's spring ready-to-wear collection, I feel it would be amazing to work toward the new creative director Heather London's vision. It must be a very exciting time for the Jonson label.

I look forward to hearing from you in the near future and am available for an interview at your convenience. Please contact me with any questions you may have. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

*Andrea Abre*

Andrea Abre

**SAMPLE #3 - Letter Accompanying a Resume for an On-Campus Interview** (While not always required, resumes submitted for campus interviews are often accompanied by cover letters. This letter provides you with an opportunity to demonstrate your knowledge of the organization, indicates why you are interested in the position, and highlights your background and experience as it applies to the position.)

2468 College Avenue  
Palo Alto, CA 94306

January 10, 20XX

Mr. John Boulton (or if name is not known, "Recruiting Staff")  
Director, Technical Administration  
Hillview Laboratories  
22244 Stevens Creek Blvd.  
San Jose, CA 94000

Dear Mr. Boulton:

I appreciate the opportunity to meet with you this coming Thursday to discuss employment opportunities at Hillview Laboratories and to expand on my qualifications for the (title of position). I reviewed your website and literature at the Career Development Center (or Business School Library) and also spoke with Janet Morris, who works at Hillview. Her comments have given me a clearer idea of your R & D efforts and the work with which I might be involved. In particular, I am impressed by your state-of-the-art laboratories and how Hillview has effectively integrated a participatory management style in its total operation.

As my resume reflects, I have previous research experience in the area of... where I... (explain what you did). You will note my graduate work also directly relates to the type of work currently being done at Hillview (Or highlight previous summer experience, coursework, thesis topic, or special skills that may be relevant to this employer. DO highlight or expand on a relevant entry from your resume, but DO NOT simply repeat what is already on your resume.).

Thank you for your interest in my application and your willingness to come to Stanford University for interviews. I look forward to meeting you and discussing how my background and experience can contribute to your work.

Sincerely,

*Jason E. Jefferson*

Jason E. Jefferson

**SAMPLE #4 - Letter as the Result of a Phone Conversation**

P.O. Box 11335  
Stanford, CA 94309

February 2, 20XX

Mr. Scott Campbell, Managing Editor  
*Corpus Christi Caller-Times*  
P.O. Box 9136  
Corpus Christi, TX 78469-9136

Dear Mr. Campbell:

As a result of our phone conversation on January 31, I am sending you my resume as you requested. I have also taken the liberty of attaching a sample of my writing. I was encouraged to contact you after speaking with my high school journalism teacher, Mr. Bill Jenkins, who has ties with Ms. Sally Smith of your organization. As I mentioned in our discussion, I am currently a student at Stanford University and am very interested in journalism, advertising, and graphic design. I am seeking an opportunity to develop and utilize my skills and qualifications in a paid summer internship, doing whatever work possible. Growing up in Corpus Christi, the *Caller-Times* has always been part of my life. Now that I am older I have come to respect it as a professional service vital to our community, and am now eager to enlist and gain insight into the career I dream of holding.

My passion for journalism has only grown with time. As a Managing Editor of *Hoofbeat*, my high school's national award-winning newspaper, I collaborated with fellow editors and managed a staff of nearly 30 younger writers as part of the overall process of overseeing production of the newspaper from conception to publication. As my resume indicates, I have demonstrated strong leadership and undergone extensive training through active participation in academic and professional organizations. In my effort to fully develop these important skills, I will continue to serve as a Layout Designer for *The Stanford Scientific*, the only full-color publication on campus for the duration of this academic year. I hope to gain the position of Head of Production in the years ahead.

In addition to my experience in journalism, my instruction includes coursework in statistics, psychology, and persuasive writing, and experience fielding phone calls and collecting data. My education has honed the writing, planning, organization, and presentation skills that I believe are essential to working in communications.

I am excited about the many aspects of the journalism world and welcome the prospect of discussing opportunities to explore them in your company. I will follow up in a week to answer questions you may have or provide additional information. In the meantime, should you have questions, I can be reached at 650-555-5555 or [sjohnson@stanford.edu](mailto:sjohnson@stanford.edu).

Thank you for your time and I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Sincerely,

*Sarah Johnson*

Sarah Johnson

**SAMPLE #5 - Unsolicited or Broadcast Letter** (Mailing unsolicited letters is another way to tap into the hidden job market. While the “letter campaign” is not the most effective strategy for every job seeker, unsolicited letters may work well for applicants with unique expertise in a given area or special technical skills, or for those who wish to work for small organizations in a specific capacity.)

P.O. Box 22445  
Stanford, CA 94309

August 7, 20XX

Dr. John Allen, Associate Director  
INT Consulting Company  
12396 Park Blvd.  
Los Angeles, CA 93032

Dear Dr. Allen:

Currently I am a student at Stanford University pursuing a BA degree in economics. I am very interested in business-related careers and am seeking opportunities to develop and utilize my skills and qualifications. I have researched your company and believe that your commitment to excellence and service is in alignment with my career goals and beliefs.

In addition to economics, my academic training includes extensive coursework in the sciences where I’ve developed very strong analytical, quantitative, and technical skills. Through my research, I have cultivated strong planning, organization, and presentation skills that I believe will be an asset in a business environment.

As an Investment Banker Summer Intern at Morgan Stanley, I collaborated with brokers to market online investing, consulted with prospective clients and networked through the internet and other computer software. As my resume indicates, I have demonstrated strong leadership and decision-making skills through active participation in campus organizations. In my effort to continue to develop these important skills, I will serve as a Head Academic Advisor this coming year, teaming with resident assistants and faculty members to plan educational and social programs for freshmen to help them plan their academics and adjust to campus life.

I am excited about the many facets of the business world and welcome the opportunity to discuss opportunities to explore in your company. I will follow up in a week to answer questions you may have or provide additional information. In the meantime, should you have questions, I can be reached at 650-600-0000 or mjohnson@stanford.edu.

Thank you for your time and I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Sincerely,

*Maria Johnson*

Maria Johnson



**SAMPLE #6 - Approach Letter or Networking Letter** (Approach letters request information about an organization or industry. They are generally sent to specific contacts you may have obtained from a friend, the Stanford Alumni Network, a career fair representative or faculty member. Depending on your purpose, you may or may not want to send a resume with this type of letter.

P.O. Box 12345  
Stanford, CA 94309  
650-999-1212

February 10, 20XX

Ms. Laura Valencia  
Manager  
Creative Services Department  
Putnam, Blair and Associates  
12 Front Street  
San Francisco, CA 94108

Dear Ms. Valencia:

This June, I will graduate with a B.A. degree in English from Stanford University. I have a strong interest in advertising and will soon seek a position as a Junior or Assistant Copywriter. Robert Blum encouraged me to contact you, suggesting that you might be willing to meet with me and provide an insider's view of how I can best identify employment opportunities in this field.

It may be helpful for you to know that I completed a summer internship in the Marketing Department of a small high-tech company and have worked as the Advertising Manager at the *Stanford Daily*. I believe that both experiences are relevant to future work in advertising. I have strong writing and communication skills and enjoy working in a fast-paced environment. In addition, working throughout my Stanford career to finance a substantial portion of my education has strengthened my time management skills and determination to pursue and achieve my goals. These skills, together with my passion for photography, fascination with the consumer market, and personal interest in the creative side of advertising lead to my strong interest in this field.

I will be in touch with you by phone this week. At your convenience, I would like to set up a short 20-30 minute meeting with you at your worksite. Any advice or suggestions for my job search are welcomed.

I understand you are busy, and I appreciate your time.

Sincerely,

*Amy Chen*

Amy Chen