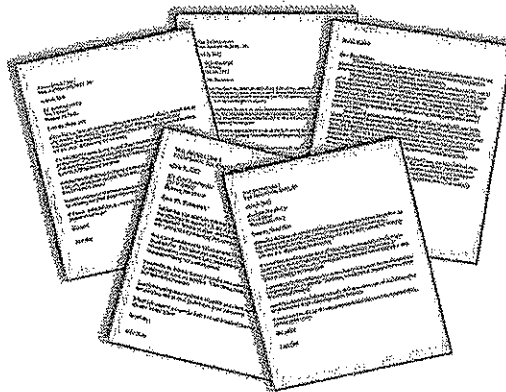




COMMUNITY COLLEGE  
OF RHODE ISLAND

# COVER LETTERS



*Office of*  
**CAREER PLACEMENT,**  
**COOPERATIVE EDUCATION & INTERNSHIPS**



COMMUNITY COLLEGE OF RHODE ISLAND

*Office of*  
**CAREER PLACEMENT, COOPERATIVE EDUCATION & INTERNSHIPS**

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## Cover Letters

Cover letters are **extremely** important. Whenever your resume is sent by mail, fax, or e-mail, a cover letter should go along with it. Here's what a good cover letter needs to accomplish:

1. **Address someone in authority** (by name and title) who could hire you. When it's **impossible** to get that information, use a functional title ("Dear Manager") even if you have to guess ("Dear Selection Committee").
2. **Tell how you became attracted** to this particular company.
3. **Demonstrate that you've done some "homework"** on the company and can see their point of view (their current problems, their interests, their priorities). Use the Internet to help you here. Most companies have their own web pages and are only too happy to share with you their company background.
4. **Convey your enthusiasm and commitment** (even passion) for this line of work.
5. **Balance professionalism with personal warmth and friendliness.**
6. **Identify at least one thing about you that's unique** – a special gift for getting along with all kinds of people – something that goes beyond the basic requirements of the position that distinguishes you **and** is relevant to the position. (Then if several others are equally qualified, there's a reason to pick **you**.)
7. **Be appropriate** to the field you're exploring – **stand out**, but in a non-gimmicky way.
8. **Outline specifically what you are asking** and offering.
9. **Point directly to the next step**, telling just what **you** will do to follow through.
10. **Remain as brief and focused as possible.**



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## Ten Cover Letter Strategies

1. Make it easy for someone to understand "who" you are. Are you a sales representative, nurse, college professor, chemical engineer, restaurant manager, customer service agent or architect? Be sure to clearly communicate that information at the beginning of your cover letter. Don't make someone read three paragraphs to find this critical information. No one is going to take the time and energy to figure it out.
2. Use a unique and professional format when writing and typing your cover letters. Make your letters visually attractive and distinctive. Tap into your inner self to see how creative and professional you can be in writing the text and designing the presentation.
3. Emphasize your most relevant qualifications. Use your cover letters to highlight your skills, experiences, qualifications, honors and credentials that are directly relevant to the company's needs and type of position and/or career path you are pursuing.
4. Shine a spotlight on your most relevant achievements. Be certain to highlight your career successes, results and accomplishments that will be most meaningful to the intended audience of each specific letter.
5. Include information that you know about the company or the position for which you are applying. If you know any particulars about the company to which you are writing (for example, core issues, challenges, market opportunities, services or management changes), be sure to address those items in your cover letter. Relate specifically how your experience can meet the company's needs and provide solutions to its challenges.
6. Explain why you want to work for this company in particular. Do you want to work for the company because of its reputation, financial standing, products, services, location or market potential? Everyone likes a good "pat on the back" for a job well done. Company management is no different. Tell them what they're doing right that caught your attention.
7. Be sure your cover letters are neat, clean and well presented. Remember, cover letters are business documents, not advertising materials. They should be attractive and relatively conservative, not "over-designed."
8. Double-check, triple-check, and then have someone else check your letter to be sure that it is error-free. Remember, people don't meet you; they meet a piece of paper. And that piece of paper — your cover letter — reflects the quality and caliber of the work you will do on their behalf. Even the smallest of errors is unacceptable.
9. Keep your cover letters short. Cover letters are not essays. We recommend a one-page letter in nearly all circumstances.
10. Always remind yourself why you are writing each cover letter, and be sure to ask for the interview. Remember, securing an interview is your primary objective for each letter you write.

The above information was taken from book, *Cover Letter Magic*, by Wendy S. Enelow and Louise Kursmark.

- Sample Cover Letters -

**Note:** In all cases, include the job hunter's **return address, date, and phone number**, which may have been removed here to save space.

Mr. Anthony Lonczak, Personnel  
California Valley Systems  
487 Doll Drive  
Bellflower, CA 94806

Dear Mr. Lonczak:

Through Experience Unlimited of Oakland, I learned of your opening for the position of Buyer, and spoke to you about it on September 4. As you requested, I am enclosing a resume outlining my experience as it relates to this position.

As you will note, I have 10 years of technical experience dealing with both customers and manufacturing management. I believe that my background combining very relevant technical and administrative skills would be of benefit in this position.

I would enjoy an in-person discussion of my qualifications and your needs, in more detail.

Sincerely,

Russ Meyer

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David Amaral, President  
ERC Center  
78 Littlejohn Brown Road  
Almonte, NY 12305

Dear Mr. Amaral:

I am enclosing a copy of my resume, which outlines my strengths in the areas of marketing support, field liaison, and research and development.

For the past 2 ½ years I have worked for Hagan Bikes, which has earned a reputation for dealing with some of the finest domestic, hand-built bikes available. During that time, I have become familiar with all aspects of the retail bike business, in particular mountain bikes.

I am familiar with ERC's mountain bike components and use some of them on my own personal mountain and road bikes. In my opinion, your Hutnak was the most innovative mountain bike component package available at the time, clearly having a competitive edge. But for one reason or another, ERC seemed to take a back seat to the competition for a while in the area of contemporary bike components.

At this year's Reno trade show, however, I was pleased to notice that ERC seems to have gotten back in the running, and I would like to be part of that comeback.

I feel I have much to offer due to my familiarity with top-of-the-line mountain bikes and components, and I would enjoy discussing these subjects with you, as well as my possible employment. I may be reached at home at (415) 404-0900, or at work at (415) 404-6776.

Sincerely,

Edward Sullivan

- Sample Cover Letters -

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BOOKKEEPER p/t, F/C. Growing San Rafael based hi-tech mfg co. seeks Organized F/C responsible for daily Operations including A/P. A/R. & G/L. Must have maint. boks on a computer, Have PC spreadsheet exp. & 3 yrs. F/C. Send resume & salary req. to: Anna Madrigal, 28 Barbary Lane, SF 94104.

Ms. Anna Madrigal  
28 Barbary Lane  
San Francisco, CA 94104

Dear Ms. Madrigal:

Because of my combined interest in accounting and computers, I am applying for the bookkeeper position which you recently advertised.

I am enclosing a copy of my resume for your consideration, and would like to call your attention to the areas of skill and achievement in my background that are most relevant.

- Over 12 years bookkeeping experience for a variety of businesses.
- Over 4 years full-charge bookkeeping experience with computerized accounting systems.
- Familiar with PC-DOS operating system.
- Exceptionally organized and resourceful, with a wide range of skills.

My current employer, Mr. Armistead Maupin, is gradually retiring from active law practice, and therefore I am looking for a new position. My currently salary is \$25,000, and I do not wish to earn less than that in my new job.

I would appreciate a personal interview with you to discuss my application further.

Sincerely,

Mary Ann Singleton

- Sample Cover Letters -

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Coordinator of Certified Personnel  
1025 Second Avenue  
Oakland, CA 94606

Dear Coordinator:

I was very pleased to learn of the opening for the position at Oakland High School. On my enclosed resume I have outlined my professional and educational background, and given special attention to those experiences and accomplishments that address Oakland High's stated needs and requirements.

I am a "take charge" type of administrator, and I have demonstrated strong leadership and initiative in addressing the schools' most difficult problems. I have a particularly strong record of success in developing curriculum that meets the needs of all students.

It is my nature and philosophy to look for the best in students, and to do whatever is necessary to help them perform to their fullest potential. With this in mind, I recently attended a workshop at Harvard University (and plan to return this summer), where materials have been developed to effectively teach study skills to high school students. This workshop prepared me to introduce these critically important materials to teachers for their use in their classrooms.

I would welcome the opportunity to share with you additional examples of contributions I might make to the program at Oakland High School.

Sincerely,

Rosa E. Lopez

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Mr. Chandler Bing  
Phoebe Food Corp.  
200 Ross Drive  
Chicago, IL 60606

Dear Mr. Bing:

Your display ad in last Sunday's *Tribune* for a Brand Manager for a major packaged goods product is of special interest to me because it calls for qualifications which completely correspond to my background and job objective.

As you can see on my resume, in addition to an excellent professional background in brand management, I have had particular success with new product introductions, twice being promoted because of my ideas and innovations.

It is time for me to move on to a company such as ours, which I know to be one of the one of the largest and most prestigious food companies in the United States. I have had seven solid years of experience on a smaller scale and now want to bring my ideas and knowledge to your firm.

May I ask you to read the resume and permit me to phone your secretary next week for an appointment? I look forward to meeting you and thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Monica Geller

- Sample Cover Letters -

**Note:** In all cases, include the job hunter's **return address, date, and phone number**, which may have been removed here to save space.

Another kind of cover letter, a "*broadcast letter*," is a letter sent to several different companies at once, when there is *not* a known job opening and you are asking for an exploratory interview anyway. If your broadcast letter has enough detail (such as the one below) you could send it *instead* of a resume. Otherwise, it might *accompany* your resume.

Mr. Arthur Grover  
Program Sales Manager  
Xerox Corporation  
121 Heather Street  
Farmington, MA 02777

Dear Mr. Grover:

Your firm came to my attention while I was doing career research to locate companies that have a quality product and offer in-service training in my desired area, which is sales/marketing and management.

I would like an opportunity to talk with you in person about your personnel needs and to present some of my experience and accomplishments which I believe may relate to them.

In eight years of extensive professional contact, these are some highlights of my experience:

- I wrote a successful grant proposal which brought my organization \$25,000, enabling us to create an additional full-time position.
- I designed, implemented and promoted an innovative arts therapy project, for which I succeeded in attracting volunteer guest artists and contributions of free supplies, and greatly increased client participation.
- I supervised two staff persons as coordinator of a new follow-up services program which I developed, resulting in expanded and higher-quality outreach to clients resistant to agency visits.

It would be my pleasure to discuss further details of my business experience as related to your firm's future staff requirements. I'll be calling your office in a few days to see if an appointment can be arranged. I can be reached at (415) 540-6888 if you should prefer to call me before then.

Yours truly,

William Pistocco



## Carefully Crafted Cover Letter

By Barbara Mulligan

Each month, Amy Pesavento reads nearly 200 letters from people hoping to land a job at Wallace Computer Services Inc. Each month, she finds a few good ones--and a few that cause her to cringe.

"Some cover letters are addressed to me but refer to another company in the body of the letter," says Pesavento, human resources manager at the Denver, Colorado-based firm. "Some writers say, 'I will follow up with you in two weeks,' but it's rare that they actually call."

Ben Gotkin, a college recruiter for Marconi Systems Technology Inc. in Rockville, Maryland, is all too familiar with the cookie-cutter approach to letter writing--and the mistakes writers of such letters sometimes make.

"It's obviously someone who's sent a resume to 500 companies out there," he says, pointing out that sending such a letter does nothing to set a candidate apart from other job seekers--and plenty to hurt his or her chances of landing a job.

Pesavento and Gotkin agree that they're much more likely to be impressed with a letter that shows them the candidate possesses the skills necessary for the job and understands what the company does.

"I like to see a little bit about their background," Pesavento says. "I also like to see something that shows they've researched the company and that they would be a good fit."

Gotkin adds that the letter should be concise.

"Don't make it an essay or a novel," he says. "If it is easy to read and doesn't ramble, then it's probably what you want."

Marcy Bullock, coordinator of career services for North Carolina State University's College of Agriculture & Life Science, encourages students to customize their letters using short, well-chosen pieces of information about the company.

"It's not generic. You can throw some 'sound bites' in," she says. "Let's say you're writing to American Cyanamid, you can say you understand they have one of the top 10 crop-protection chemicals on the market right now."

Bullock says job seekers can learn more about a company's products, services, and corporate style by visiting its web site and reading literature like brochures and annual reports. That information, she says, can help determine if a letter is phrased formally or informally.

John B. Frick, director of the JOBSearch Center at Northern Michigan University, agrees that research is an important part of the cover letter--as long as it's presented concisely.

"It shows the employer that the student took initiative," he says.

Frick adds that job seekers who mail their resume and cover letter should take care that they're presented as a package.

"Make it look professional," he says. "Match the paper the resume's on."

For some employers, however, that kind of presentation no longer matters. Carol Dedrick, manager of college relations at National Starch & Chemical Co. in Bridgewater, New Jersey, says her firm now uses Restrak, a system that allows employees to electronically scan all resumes and cover letters.

"Everything is coming in electronically now, she says. "We never see a piece of paper ever, ever, ever."

Dedrick says the switch has brought changes to the way she and her staff read resumes and cover letters.

"The ideal way for students to send us resumes is over e-mail in ASCII text, with just a mini-cover letter that precedes the resume itself," she says, explaining that she won't see the paper documents anyway, and the scanning process can sometimes cause errors to be inserted into a resume or letter.

Dedrick adds that if a job seeker sends a resume and cover letter on paper, the letter may not even be scanned into the system.

"If it says something important, they'll scan it in," she says, explaining that "important" can mean salary information or a description of strong skills.

"I think the highlight is to interpret what you think your strengths are, what you bring to the table," she says.

Pesavento and Gotkin say that while they don't mind receiving resumes and cover letters by mail, they're quite happy with e-mailed and faxed resumes.

"It doesn't matter as much anymore if it's on nice paper," Gotkin says. "For me, it's okay as long as it's readable."

Still, career advisers say it's better to present mailed material neatly--many employers still care about those details. Best of all, they agree, is to know as much as possible about the employer in the first place.

"Your cover letter should be a custom-tailored, personalized summary directed at a key market," Bullock says. "If you really want to have your letter rise to the top of the stack, take the time and really make it shine."