

Student name: _____ Date: _____

Prepare a letter of application.

Objectives:

- A. Describe the purpose of the letter of application and why they are necessary.
- B. Explain the parts of a cover letter.
- C. Gain important advice as to what should be included in a letter of application.
- D. Prepare a rough draft and a final draft of a letter of application.

MODULE 3B: INFORMATION SHEET

TO THE STUDENT: Read and study this information, then complete the student activities at the end of this section.

Why a cover letter?

Just as you would never show up unannounced at a prospective employer's door, your resume should never just appear solo on a decision maker's desk. The letter of application is most commonly known as a cover letter. The cover letter is your first opportunity to introduce yourself, present your qualifications and show the search committee that you are a potential candidate for the advertised position. It is required anytime that you apply for a job by sending a resume.

Personalize your cover letter.

A tip when applying for any position is to encourage the employer to believe that the job in which you are applying for is the perfect job for you. Take a few minutes to personalize your letter, in order to show the employer you are serious about working for their organization. State the reasons why you are interested in working for their organization. Show that you have done your homework by mentioning company specifics such as: mentioning your understanding as to why the organization exists. You can also mention special characteristics or events that demonstrate your knowledge of the organization. When ever possible, you should address the cover letter to the specific hiring manager that will make the final hiring decision.

What's included in a cover letter?

Cover letters should be clear and to the point. Include the specific job title, two to three reasons why your experience makes a good fit and a brief outline of your career highlights.

Highlight your strengths.

You may be a great person and never call in sick, but prospective employers really want to know why they should consider you for this position. Brag a little! Give a few facts, list relevant skills and state accomplishments on recent jobs that the employers will be impressed by. This is not the time to be shy.

Explain why you are more qualified than other candidates.

Emphasize your skills, talents and experiences to show how you would be a valuable addition to the team. If you have relevant volunteer or professional experience, mention it briefly in your cover letter. For example, if you are a volunteer firefighter who serves your community, include that information. A lot of the skills you use as a volunteer are needed by employers.

Job Descriptions

Call or visit the employer and ask them if you can have a copy of the position's job description. This will help you do two things. First, you will discover the actual qualifications for the job. Second, this will let you know if you are qualified. If you find that you can perform most of the essential skills, apply for the job. Make sure you are prepared to explain any shortfalls. A willingness to learn is always helpful. ***Never*** call an employer when an advertisement specifically states, "do not call".

No negative information

You should never include any negative information about previous employers in your cover letter or during a job interview. If you are bad-mouthing a previous employer, interviewers may fear a repeat performance if they hire you. Always remain upbeat and confident.

When should you include salary information?

The rule of thumb is to only include salary requirements and/or salary history in the cover letter if a prospective employer requests it. Conduct research and find out what is considered to be a reasonable salary for the position that you are seeking. Never give a specific salary. Always give a salary range. An example of this salary information would be; my desired salary will range between \$20,000.00 and \$25,000.00 annually depending upon the position's responsibilities and other incentives that may be included as a part of the employee's benefit package. You should never include salary information on your resume. Only address this information in your cover letter if you

are asked. You don't want the employer thinking that you are more interested in the salary and benefits than you are interested in the position.

Be proactive

Take a proactive approach in your cover letter. Make sure that you mention that you are looking forward to discussing this opportunity with them in the near future. State the fact that you are available for a personal interview; provide a phone number where you know you can be reached. It is highly recommended that you have either an answering machine or an answering service that will help you get the unexpected message.

Maintain your professionalism

A professionally written cover letter and resume can open the door to your new job. A clean, error-free presentation, combined with strong phrasing and solid facts, will encourage the reader to review the attached resume and call you in for an interview.

1. Research and write specific information about the organization. If possible, avoid the phrase, "To Whom It May Concern." Instead, you should ask, "who is the hiring manager". Ask them for a specific name and title. Never address the letter to "Dear Sir"; it could be a lady.
2. Sign a cover letter using blue or black ink. Never use any other color on the cover letter.
3. Structure the cover letter to reflect your individuality, but avoid appearing too familiar, overbearing, humorous, or cute. Keep sentences short and to the point.
4. Keep the cover letter brief, usually no more than three to five paragraphs. The cover letter should not be longer than one page.
5. The paper and style of your cover letter should be the same color and quality as you used for your resume. You might consider using the same paper stock for both your cover letter and resume.

Use proper grammar and spelling.

Enough can't be said about the importance of using proper grammar and spelling when writing a cover letter. An employer once said that his/her interviews begin with his/her first contact with the applicant. Many times the first contact with the employer is through the mail in the form of a cover letter and an accompanying resume.

Employers are looking for employees who can write in a professional manner. Employees need to be able to express their thoughts in writing. What is written in your cover letter should be easy to read and understand. Care should be taken to insure that you are using correct grammar and spelling.

Make sure you proofread your work. A good recommendation is to have one or two additional people proofread your work. Since you wrote the cover letter, you are less likely to find mistakes you wrote. A fresh set of eyes will be extremely helpful in finding errors. In addition, two heads are better than one. Other people may offer suggestions that could enhance the overall quality of your cover letter.

Carefully read the sample cover letter instructions on the next page.

An outline of a cover letter.

Your Name
Your Present Address
City, State, Zip Code

Note: This section of the letter is also known as a header. The header should match the same style and format that you used to write the header on your resume

Date

Name of person you are sending the letter to
Title
Organization
Street Address
City, State, Zip Code

Dear (name of person you are sending the letter to):

1st Paragraph • Clarify why you are writing to the employer. Name the position, field, or general career area for which you are inquiring. Explain how you heard of the opening or organization. Make sure you also name the source of where you heard about the job opening. Employers like to know that their marketing efforts are working. If you heard about the position through someone you know, name names, if you think that person could help you land the job. Only use the name of an individual you know is considered to be creditable by the hiring organization.

2nd Paragraph • This is the “sell” paragraph. Mention a few of your qualifications you think would be of greatest interest to the organization. Make sure your qualifications directly relate to the position that you hoping to gain. Tell why you are particularly interested in the employer, location, or type of work. If you have had related experience or specialized training, be sure to point it out. The key here is to understand the qualifications that the employer is looking for. When writing this paragraph, you should make every effort to show the employer that you are the person they are seeking. Understand, when an employer has an opening they are looking for someone to help them fill a need. It is your job to demonstrate to the employer that you are the best candidate to fill their need.

3rd Paragraph • This is the closing paragraph. Reiterate your interest in the position. Express, with enthusiasm, your interest in meeting with the employer as soon as possible. Close by reminding the employer of your phone number. In a way, you are asking the employer to call you. If, instead of wanting an interview, your request is for further information concerning the opening, it would be polite to enclose a self-addressed, stamped envelope.

Sincerely,

(Your Handwritten Signature)

Type Your Name

Enclosure

Cover letter sample.

FREDA JOHNSON
(570) 555-1212

777 Opportunity Avenue
Newburgh, PA 38227

January 9, 2006

Ms. Lisa Simpson
Human Resources Management
Community Care Center
206 East Brown St.
Newburgh, PA 38277

Dear Ms. Simpson:

In response to the Certified Nursing Assistant position, which was advertised, in the June 14, 2002 edition of the *Daily Times*, please accept a copy of my resume for your review.

An organization can only be as good as the people that work for that organization. Quality starts with the new hire. As a Certified Nursing Assistant, I will do my very best to insure Community Care Center's patients receive the quality of care that they deserve and you demand. According to your advertisement, you are seeking a trained, motivated and caring individual. I successfully completed my Certified Nursing Assistant training at the Newburgh Career and Technical Center. During my clinical, my instructors, mentors and patients complemented me. Each stated how they were impressed with the quality of patient care I delivered.

I look forward to hearing from you in the near future where we can further discuss my qualifications and your needs. If you have any questions, or you would like to schedule an interview, feel free at call me at (570) 555-1212.

Sincerely;

Freda Johnson

Freda Johnson

Enclosure

Activity 2: Create a rough draft of a cover letter. Have the instructor correct any mistakes, then type a final draft.

Header information:

Your name: _____

Your Address: _____

Your City, State, Zip-code _____

Today's date: _____

Hiring Manager's Name: _____

Organization's Name: _____

Hiring Manager's Address: _____

Hiring Manager's City, State & Zip-code: _____

Dear: _____

1st Paragraph: _____

2nd Paragraph: _____

3rd Paragraph: _____

Sincerely:

Enclosure

MODULE 3B: STANDARDS ADDRESSED IN THIS MODULE

Pennsylvania’s Academic Standards for Career Education and Work**13.2.11. Career Acquisition (Getting a Job)**

- C. Develop and assemble, for career portfolio placement, career acquisition documents, such as, but not limited to:
- Job application
 - Letter of appreciation following an interview
 - Letter of introduction
 - Postsecondary education/training applications
 - Request for letter of recommendation
 - Resume

Pennsylvania’s Academic Standards for Reading, Writing, Speaking and Listening (RWSL)**1.1.11. Learning to Read Independently**

- E. Establish a reading vocabulary by identifying and correctly using new words acquired through the study of their relationships to other words. Use a dictionary or related reference.

1.5.11. Quality of Writing

- A. Write with a sharp, distinct focus.
- Identify topic, task and audience.
 - Establish and maintain a single point of view.
- B. Write using well-developed content appropriate for the topic.
- Gather, determine validity and reliability of, analyze and organize information.
 - Employ the most effective format for purpose and audience.
 - Write fully developed paragraphs that have details and information specific to the topic and relevant to the focus.

- F. Edit writing using the conventions of language.
- Spell all words correctly.
 - Use capital letters correctly.
 - Punctuate correctly (periods, exclamation points, question marks, commas, quotation marks, apostrophes, colons, semicolons, parentheses, hyphens, brackets, ellipses).
 - Use nouns, pronouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, conjunctions, prepositions and interjections properly.
 - Use complete sentences (simple, compound, complex, declarative, interrogative, exclamatory and imperative).