



DEPAUL UNIVERSITY

CAREER CENTER



Job Search Letters

This resource can guide you through the process of creating your first job search letters. The first page gives you an overview of the key elements of successful cover letters. Samples of different types of letters, including traditional cover letters, prospecting letters, networking letters, thank you letters, and other forms of job search correspondence follow. The final sample illustrates how to use a job description to inform an effective cover letter.

DePaul University's Peer Career Advisors are available on a walk-in basis to review your drafts. Inquire about Peer Career Advisor Program hours by calling the Career Center at (312) 362-8437 (Loop Campus) or (773) 325-7431 (Lincoln Park Campus) or email peercareeradvisor@depaul.edu.

Getting Started: Definitions and Best Practices

Types of Job Search Letters

Job search letters provide you with the opportunity to highlight key pieces of information about you as a job seeker to employers and networking contacts. There are four major types of job search letters that will be addressed in this packet:

Cover letters aim to introduce you as a candidate and pair your qualifications with the requirements of a specific position. It is used to initiate contact with an employer, capture their interest, and compliment your resume, in hopes of ultimately securing an interview. As it is a best practice to customize your letter to the position at hand, this packet includes the job descriptions that inspired the two cover letter samples. Notice how the letters respond to and highlight how the applicants will be able to fulfill the requirements outlined in the position descriptions.

Through a **prospecting letter** you are able to declare your interest in and fit for an organization in the absence of a specific opening of interest. That is, you are applying to the organization, versus responding to a job listing.

Networking letters are an opportunity to connect with a potential or established contact, usually to request an informational interview or follow up on a previous conversation. Because these letters are most often sent via email, the included sample is in that format.

Finally, the professional **thank you letter** most often follows an interview or networking connection and is a way to both express your appreciation to the contact for his or her time and declare your strong interest in the position, organization, or professional relationship.

Regardless of the type of letter, it is of utmost importance that each letter be crafted in a professional manner and be tailored to your audience. While the themes and examples you employ in your letters may be similar from letter to letter, each document should be drafted with its addressee and specific purpose in mind.

Format and Aesthetics

Like your resume, your job search letters represent you to an employer. As such, you want to ensure that you present yourself professionally and succinctly. Best practices in formatting your letters include:

- ◆ **Length:** A cover letter should not exceed one page and typically contains 3 to 5 paragraphs. Consider that your reader will have many candidates to review. A letter that is too long may seem daunting to read and get passed over, while a targeted, succinct letter will draw his or her attention to the most important aspects of your message.
- ◆ **Margins:** White space on your page can make your letter more visually appealing. Using .5 inch to 1.5 inch margins is recommended.
- ◆ **Font:** Match your cover letter font to that of your resume. Use a font that is easy to read, avoiding those that are overly stylized. Depending on the specific font, a 10-12 point font size is recommended to ensure readability.
- ◆ **Accuracy:** Your letter must be 100% error free. Be sure to carefully read through your cover letter, checking grammar, spelling, and punctuation. It is a good idea to have at least 2-3 people proofread it as well.
- ◆ **Standard Business Letter Format:** Note the proper placement of address blocks, dates, signature blocks, and other letter elements on the attached samples. It is appropriate to single space your document and indenting paragraphs is not necessary.
- ◆ **Word Choice:** Use clear and concise language to express yourself. Being wordy or employing overly dense language can distract from your ability to effectively argue your fit and provide a strong, professional writing sample.

Key Elements of Successful Cover Letters

Your present address
City, State, Zip Code

Today's date

Individual's First & Last Name
Title
Company
Street Address
City, State, Zip Code

Dear Mr./Ms. Last Name:

Introduction: Indicate the reason for writing, the specific position or type of work for which you are applying and how you learned of the opening (Career Center, name of publication or website, friend, employment service, etc.).

Body: (One to three paragraphs) Mention why you are interested in the position, the organization, its products or services; above all, indicate what you can do for the employer. If you are a recent graduate, explain how your academic background makes you a qualified candidate for the position. If you have had some practical work experience, point out the specific achievements or unique qualifications. Try not to repeat the same information the reader will find in the resume. Refer the reader to the attached resume or application, which summarizes your qualifications, training and experience. As much as possible, try to tie your qualifications to the employer's needs, particularly those expressed in the job description.

Conclusion: In the closing paragraph, indicate your desire for a personal interview. You may want to suggest alternative dates and times or simply advise the employer of your flexibility as to the time and place. Repeat your contact information in the letter and offer any assistance to help in a speedy response. Finally, close your letter with a statement or question that will encourage a response. For example, say you will be in the city where the organization is located on a certain date and would like to set up an interview. Or, ask if the company will be recruiting in your area.

Sincerely,

(Your neatly handwritten signature here)

Your name typed

SAMPLE 1: Internship Description for Cover Letter

Employer:
College Media

Job Title:
Advertising Coordinator Intern

Description:

The position requires coordinating our long-running university-based advertising campaigns and publications, specifically our planner board, which is provided at no cost to students and allows them to make note of their schedules and to do items. This dry erase board can be posted in the student's dorm room and includes paid advertisements from local partners seeking to attract the business of college students.

Responsibilities include:

- Collaborate with partners and manage the publication of our annual publications planner board
- Utilize your insight as a student when meeting with and managing our local clients/sponsors/affiliates, while effectively communicating the features of the planner board
- Provide clients with a student's perspective regarding their advertisement design and promotional message for our campaigns
- Generate daily reports regarding account activities
- Engage in account management and provide high quality customer service

SAMPLE 1: Cover Letter for Internship

111 N. Sheridan Road
Chicago, IL 60000

April 28, 2015

Mr. Joseph Smith
Advertising Account Manager
College Media
222 W. Wabash
Chicago, Il. 60001

Dear Mr. Smith,

I am responding to the advertisement on DePaul University's job board for the Advertising Coordinator Internship within your company. As a Public Relations and Advertising major at DePaul University, I am confident that my skills and abilities align with those necessary to be a successful intern with your company.

Having reviewed the job description, I have noticed that this position places an emphasis on university based advertising. I understand that the ideal candidate would be able to provide a perspective on how to best reach students through advertisements and promotions. As you can see from my resume, I am currently serving as the Vice President of Marketing for Students United, a campus-based student organization. In this role, I have acquired skills that will allow me to be a valuable asset to your organization. For example, I have:

- Designed posters, buttons, and social media campaigns to advertise social and philanthropic events to university students, resulting in a 25% increase in attendance compared to events from the previous school year.
- Collaborated with other campus partners and organizations in order to increase communication regarding policies, procedures, and upcoming events on campus.
- Communicated effectively with executive board members to gather ideas regarding marketing strategies and target groups in order to promote and enhance our organization's campus image.

In addition to my role as Vice President of Marketing, I have a variety of customer service experiences that I have expanded on within my resume. As you will note, I have had the opportunity to successfully demonstrate my ability to manage customer relationships and resolve problems in a timely fashion in each of these roles.

I would welcome the opportunity to speak with you further regarding my skills and interest in this position. Please feel free to contact me at (630)333-3333 or jjpierce@mail.depaul.edu with any questions. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

John Pierce

SAMPLE 2: Entry Level Job Description for Cover Letter

Employer:

State University

Job Title:

Research Study Assistant (full-time)

Job ID:

#152243

Job Summary:

In this full-time position, the Research Study Assistant performs biomedical and/or social-behavioral research by administering tests and/or questionnaires following protocols; collecting, compiling, tabulating and/or processing responses; gathering information; and/or assisting in the preparation of material for inclusion in reports. This position completes all activities by strictly following Good Clinical Practices (GCP) and all relevant current local, state, and federal laws, regulations, guidance, policy and procedure developed by the State University Institutional Review Board (IRB), Food and Drug Administration (FDA) Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), and the International Conference on Harmonization (ICH).

Specific Responsibilities:*Technical*

- Recruits study participants
- Reviews and obtains informed consent
- Schedules study visits with participants
- Conducts interviews
- Scores test results
- Collects survey data
- Collects behavioral and brain imaging data
- Reviews medical records
- Consults with nurses and physicians to determine pretreatment and eligibility requirements of protocol from completion to registration of participants
- Facilitates communication with key personnel and participants to maintain project study flow

Administration

- Maintains detailed records of results which may include collecting, extracting and entering data; and/or preparing basic charts and graphs
- Performs scientific literature searches in support of research
- Completes portions of grant applications and/or documents associated with current local, state, and federal regulatory guidelines, requirements, laws and research protocols

Performs other duties as assigned.

Minimum Qualifications:

Successful completion of a full 4-year course of study in an accredited college or university leading to a bachelor's or higher degree in a major such as social or health science or related; OR appropriate combination of education and experience.

Preferred Competencies: (Skills, knowledge, and abilities)

- 6+ month's previous experience with human neuroscience methods, including EEG, MRI, TMS, or similar data collection.
- Minimum proficiency in electronic database management (SQL, etc.).

SAMPLE 2: Cover Letter for Entry Level Position

100 N. Kenmore Ave
Chicago, IL 60614

February 4, 2015

State University
Medical Social Sciences Department
700 Elm Street
College Town, IL 60201

RE: Job ID #152243

Dear Hiring Manager,

After viewing the job posting for the Research Study Assistant position on State University's website, I believe I am an exceptional candidate for this opportunity. I will be graduating in a few short weeks with my Bachelor of Science in Biology from DePaul University, where I have developed and demonstrated valuable research skills and solidified my passion for neuroscience.

Throughout my time at DePaul, I had the opportunity of working as a research assistant alongside of one of my esteemed professors on an IRB approved study. As a research assistant, I collected data on experiments related to neurodegenerative disorders. I was in charge of maintaining detailed records of our research, extracting and entering data, and creating graphs and charts to highlight results. As a result of this experience, I believe that my skills in assisting with the development of study protocols, building databases, and providing administrative support would allow me to contribute greatly to your research team.

In addition to my research experience, I also had the opportunity to strengthen my interpersonal skills as a volunteer at Illinois Masonic Medical Center where I escorted patients and families to the appropriate location within the hospital, while also maintaining communication with nurses and hospital staff. I understand that consulting with nurses and physicians, as well as communicating with research participants is a key component to this position. Given my experiences at Illinois Masonic Medical Center, I feel well prepared to fulfill this requirement.

I would greatly appreciate the opportunity to discuss my skills and qualifications further and learn more about the opportunity within the Medical Social Sciences Department. I can be reached by phone at 773-555-5555 or by email at mariagarcia@mail.depaul.edu.

Sincerely,

Maria Garcia

SAMPLE 3: Experienced Job Description for Cover Letter

Employer:
Top Accounting, Inc.

Job Title:
Senior Tax Accountant

Job Description:

Responsibilities

- Prepare asset, liability, income, expense, and capital account entries by compiling and analyzing account information.
- Prepare payments by verifying documentation and requesting disbursements.
- Prepare special financial reports by collecting, analyzing, and summarizing account information.
- Reconcile financial discrepancies by collecting and analyzing account information.
- Comply with federal, state, and local financial legal requirements by understanding and interpreting new and existing legislation.

Requirements

- Ability to generate accounting reports such as the balance sheet and income statement for the ultimate preparation of income tax returns.
- Proficiency in Microsoft Excel for efficient analyzing of various account data.
- 5 years of experience analyzing and preparing local, state and federal taxes is required.

SAMPLE 3: Cover Letter for Experienced Position

123 Main Street
Chicago, IL 60600

June 15, 2015

Ms. Denise Lopez
Chief Financial Officer
Top Accounting, Inc.
999 W 9th Street
Chicago, IL 60611

Dear Ms. Lopez,

Please accept this letter and my attached resume as my application for your current Senior Tax Accountant opening. I initially learned about the position from Joseph Taylor of your accounts receivable team, as he felt I would be a good fit for your hiring needs. Having graduated from DePaul University's highly respected Strobel Honors Program in Accountancy five years ago, I am now looking to take the next step in my career and believe I have the knowledge and skills necessary to meet the demands of this position.

As an experienced accountant, I bring a strong attention to detail and accuracy that will allow me to contribute to your team's success. In my most recent position, I have successfully prepared and reviewed tax documents for client companies. This responsibility has allowed me to hone my analytical skills and build a wealth of knowledge with regard to tax laws at the local, state, and federal levels. Additionally, I am charged with preparing and submitting detailed expense reports, including documentation and summaries, on behalf of our sales team. Having realized inefficiencies in the former protocol for this process, I have designed and implemented tracking tools using Microsoft Excel, which are now used for all expense reports across the organization.

Please find additional information regarding my proven skills and abilities detailed in my attached resume. As I am both prepared and eager to transition into the role of Senior Tax Accountant, I would very much appreciate the opportunity to further discuss my qualifications with you. Please feel free to contact me at (123) 555-5555 or pkaminnski@email.com.

Sincerely,

Paula Kaminski

SAMPLE 4: Prospecting Letter

2343 South Avenue
Chicago, IL 60614

February 12, 2015

Giada Rossi
Special Programs Assistant
Marion County Family Court Wilderness Challenge
303 Center Street
Marion, VA 24560

Dear Ms. Rossi:

As a junior at DePaul University, I am working toward a Bachelor of Arts in Political Science and am seeking an internship for the upcoming summer. While researching opportunities in the field of criminal justice and law, I found that your program works with many of the populations that I would like to serve. Therefore, I am writing to inquire about the possibility of securing an internship with your department.

Having reviewed your website, it seems that being able to conduct research, provide critical input, serve diverse populations and work independently are among the skills that are important to the work your staff conducts. My experience and education have allowed me to develop these qualities, leading me to believe that I would be a good fit for your needs. For example, I worked as a crisis hotline assistant for a local intervention center. In this role, I counseled teenagers about personal concerns and referred them, when necessary, to appropriate professional services for additional help.

I have also been active at my university as a Resident Hall Advisor, which required me to establish a relationship with over fifty residents and advise them on personal matters, as well as university policies. In this student leadership position, I developed social and educational programs each term for up to two-hundred participants. Given the residential and program-based nature of your organization, I know that I will be able to draw upon this experience in serving the youth you enroll.

I will be in the Marion area during my spring break, March 16 - March 20. If you are available, I would appreciate the opportunity to speak with you regarding internship opportunities. While I will connect with you closer to that time, please feel free to contact me at (312)555-5555 with any questions. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Katia Moldovski

SAMPLE 5: Networking Email

Subject:

Request for Informational Interview/DePaul ASK Program

Message:

Dear Ms. Hartford,

After viewing your profile on DePaul University's Alumni Sharing Knowledge database, I was eager to contact you to seek advice regarding my interest in pursuing a career in the field of human-computer interaction. As a graduate student in DePaul's HCI program, I am eager to explore potential paths by talking with experienced professionals such as you. I would greatly appreciate the opportunity to discuss your personal career path with you in hopes that it will allow me to gain a better understanding of the steps I need to take to reach my professional goals.

Please let me know if I might be able to schedule a 20-30 minute conversation with you. I can be flexible to accommodate your availability and would greatly appreciate any insights you might be willing to share with me. Please feel free to respond to this email, or reach me by phone at 773-555-5555. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,
Matthew Brown

SAMPLE 6: Thank You Letter

September 5, 2015

Ms. Elizabeth Locke
Archives Director
Logan Square Neighborhood Association
11 W. Central Ave.
Chicago, IL. 60614

Dear Ms. Locke,

Thank you for taking time out of your day to meet with me yesterday regarding the Archivist position within your organization. I truly enjoyed learning more about the opportunity, as well as the growth and development happening within Chicago's non-profit sector. As someone who has spent the last four years studying Communication and Media at DePaul University, it was empowering to learn about the role Archivists are playing in these exciting trends. I also appreciated meeting with your assistant, William, as he provided me with great insight into the specific roles within your organization.

Meeting with you reaffirmed my interest in working for the Logan Square Neighborhood Association, and I am very thankful to be considered for this opportunity. As was evident in my resume and conveyed during my interview, I have a passion for community development and have developed strong multimedia documentation skills through my coursework. I am confident that I would be able to use these experiences to add value to your organization, especially with regards to the public art archive project you outlined during our conversation.

It would be a privilege to work with you and your team. Thank you again for your time and consideration. I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Sincerely,

Christina Yang
1111 E. Ontario
Chicago, IL. 60614
(773)555-5555
CYang1111@mail.depaul.edu

A Conversation with Recruiters

DePaul's Peer Career Advisors provide students and alumni with resume and cover letter development assistance, among other services. In order to provide their advisees with the best advice, they surveyed recruiters and hiring managers about best practices in cover letters. The quotes from recruiters below offer some insight into the themes identified among the responses they gathered.

Is a Cover Letter important in the job search process?

Why/Why not?

"A cover letter can be important—it can be a great way to stand out from the crowd and highlight a few key skills/features that make you unique from the competition."

"No, most recruiters and hiring managers do not have the time to read a cover letter. This is an age where information is delivered and best received in "bites" unless the role is one that requires lots of writing and communication, skip the letter."

From the Peer Career Advisor:

While the importance of a cover letter and the attention paid to it varies by company and recruiter, you won't know which camp your audience will fall in. Therefore, it's best to offer a well-crafted cover letter for each position.

Should a candidate submit a cover letter if it is not requested in the job listing? Why or why not?

"Yes, it does not hurt to have a cover letter, but in many situations, it may not be reviewed; however, when we do want to review, it shows that the candidate was best prepared and sets them apart."

Should students use the same cover letter to apply for multiple positions? Why or why not?

"If the student is applying to multiple positions that are all very similar as far as the qualifications and skills required, then I think that using one cover letter and tweaking it for each position/company is fine. However, if the student is applying to positions with very different job descriptions and/or qualifications, then a more tailored letter would be more appropriate."

"No, they need to be customized. Some of the content can remain the same, but cover letters should be tailored to the role/company and how their experience specifically relates to the role. I can easily tell when all an applicant does is change the job position and company name."

From the Peer Career Advisor:

As you can see, it is always advised to tailor your cover letter to each position, it maximizes your chances of getting that position!

Do recruiters/hiring managers actually read cover letters?

"I read cover letters. There are some people who do not, but it is better to have one than to not."

Who should candidates address a cover letter to if a specific person is not noted in the job listing?

"The best way is to look at the job description and there is generally a person's name listed. It may be the HR coordinator or Campus Recruiter. If there is no name they can address it: Dear Human Resources, or Dear Hiring Manager."

From the Peer Career Advisor:

Don't forget to tap into your network. Perhaps a contact can help you identify the best person to address your letter to. You may also have some luck scouring the organization's website to find the name of a department or program head.

Additional Career Center Resources

The Career Center offers several options for getting help in creating and perfecting your job search documents. Take advantage of one or more of the following services available to students and alumni:

- ❖ **Peer Career Advising:** Peer Career Advisors have been specially trained to provide cover letter critiques and basic career services to the DePaul community. Peers are available for same day appointments during most business hours. You can also connect via email at peercareeradvisor@depaul.edu.
- ❖ **Online Resources:** Visit the Career Center's website at careercenter.depaul.edu to chat live with a Peer Career Advisor and to access this packet and other documents electronically.
- ❖ **Career Advising:** Career Advisors, who specialize in serving the needs of students and alumni from each of DePaul's colleges, are available to meet by appointment. Advising sessions can cover a variety of topics, including selecting a major, advanced resume development, job search strategies, interviewing skills, and other career-related concerns.

Contact the Career Center to schedule an appointment with a Career Advisor or inquire about Peer Career Advisor availability.

DePaul University Career Center Contact Information

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