



# JOB SEARCH CORRESPONDENCE



## Cover Letter

The cover letter is a selling tool that helps to introduce your résumé to an employer. You should send a cover letter along with each résumé you are mailing. The best cover letters are short and to the point. Regardless of what you say, the employer is going to scan your letter in 30 seconds or less. Remember your goal is to get the reader to take action and call you for an interview.

Typically, a cover letter is three or four paragraphs. The first paragraph introduces you and lets the employer know why you are writing. The second, and possibly third, paragraph should stress your strongest points and relate them directly to the position you seek. Please note that you do not need to use two paragraphs. If one paragraph expresses your strengths sufficiently, then that is all you need. The last paragraph closes the letter and includes a request for action.

### PARAGRAPH ONE

Tell the reader who you are and why you are applying. Describing your current status is a good way to start. “I am about to complete my degree at Washington & Jefferson College and am interested in exploring a possible affiliation with Consolidated Coal Company.” Another lead may be to express where or from whom you heard about the position. “I am writing to submit my résumé for the Employment Specialist position as advertised in the Sunday, September 26, *Pittsburgh Post Gazette*. The combination of my education and work experience makes me a uniquely qualified applicant.” You can also lead with your interest in working in a certain geographic area. The possibilities for the first paragraph are numerous. One rule to keep in mind is to keep it short and to the point.

### PARAGRAPH TWO (AND POSSIBLY PARAGRAPH THREE)

Your goal in paragraph two is to sell yourself; however, always keep the reader’s point of view in mind. Tell the reader what you have to offer or how your experience can benefit the employer. Do not focus on how you will benefit from being hired.

Mention your strengths, special skills, accomplishments, and experience. Use action words and numbers to quantify your accomplishments. Do not repeat everything that’s on your résumé. You want to paint a vivid picture of the major benefits you can bring to the employer’s organization.

If you find that you cannot effectively mention everything in just one paragraph, then include a third paragraph. Do not, however, include a third paragraph just for the sake of including it. Make sure it is meaningful and it adds to your cover letter.

### LAST PARAGRAPH

Here is where most cover letters fail terribly. They end with “Thank you for your time and consideration. I hope to hear from you soon.” Often you will not hear again from the employer and you will be left wondering about the status of your résumé.

Your last paragraph needs to be a call for action. If you are applying for a local position, ask for an interview right away.

“When may we get together for a personal interview?”

If you are applying for a position that is out of town, and you will be traveling to that area, let the employer know.

“I plan to visit Detroit during the week of November 22–26, and I would welcome the chance to meet you personally.”

You may also simply state that you will contact the recruiter’s office in the near future.

“I would appreciate an opportunity to discuss with you how I might best meet your needs. I will follow-up with your office next week.”

In the last example, follow-up can mean that you are checking to make sure your résumé and cover letter were received by the correct people or that you would like to schedule an interview with the recruiter or human resources department.

## **COVER LETTER DOs AND DON'Ts**

### **Do:**

- Make your cover letter only one page
- Use paper and an envelope that match your résumé
- Include your phone number in the letter to make it easy for the reader to take action
- Find out the name of the person doing the hiring (if possible) because using a personal name is more effective than “Dear Sir” or “Dear Madame” or “To Whom This May Concern;” ask Career Services for help if you have trouble obtaining the name
- Be professional, positive, and to the point

### **Don't:**

- Use your current employer’s letterhead if you are currently employed
- Use W&J letterhead
- Have personal letterhead printed
- “Preach” to the employer; this common mistake is a big turn off—for example: “In today’s highly competitive business world, companies must be extremely careful to control the quality of their products and services.”
- Try to explain any perceived weakness in your background
- Forget to sign your letter
- Make any errors

## Thank You Letter

Thank you letters for both job interviews and information interviews are imperative. They will set you apart from **most** of the other applicants. A thank you letter should be typed on the same paper as your cover letter and résumé. It should be professional. Also, it needs to be very timely. It is best to send a thank you letter the evening of or day after your interview.

If you interviewed with several people, ask for business cards at the end of each interview. Then, send a thank you letter to each person. If you forgot to ask for their cards, still send a thank you letter to your main contact but mention the other interviewers and thank them.

“I enjoyed speaking with you and the search committee. Everyone’s enthusiasm for the company is contagious.”

Or

“Thank you for the opportunity to meet with you and the Human Resources Department on July 30 regarding the generalist position.”

A thank you letter should be short. The basics of the letter should include:

### PARAGRAPH ONE

- Thank the interviewer for the opportunity to speak with him or her
- Mention when the interview took place and the position you interviewed for

### PARAGRAPH TWO

- Highlight why you are qualified for the position
- Supply any requested information

### PARAGRAPH THREE

- State that you are interested in the position
- Close with a statement expressing your eagerness to receive a response

## Accepting a Job Offer

While this type of letter is not as popular as it once was, if you are writing one, congratulations! It means you have a job. This type of letter implies a commitment between two parties, you and your new employer, and means the end of your job search.

The basics of the letter are simple. Express your acceptance of the offer and restate the details (your title, place of employment, start date, salary, etc.) as you understand them.

If you are unsure about any part of your employment agreement, seek clarification before writing the letter. Close the letter by thanking your contact for the employment opportunity.

Now that you have accepted a job, you should send letters to your references letting them know your status. Tell them about the position you have accepted and thank them for their time and kind words.

### Withdrawing Your Résumé from Consideration

If you have interviewed for several positions and have just accepted an offer, your next step is to withdraw your interest in the other positions. It is important for the other companies to know you are employed. Recruiting is expensive and very time consuming. Do not mislead employers by continuing in the recruitment process if you have already accepted a position.

The letter should be professional and should simply state that you appreciated the opportunity to interview, but you have accepted another position. This step is important in the job search process, because you never know when you may be seeking employment with this company in the future. Do not burn any bridges by misleading them.

### Rejection Letter

There may be a time when you are offered a position but you do not care to take it. You need to write a rejection letter as soon as you have decided to decline the offer of employment. Open the letter by expressing your appreciation for the offer. Then indicate that although the decision was a difficult one, you are declining the offer and describe your reason(s). Thank them again for their time and consideration.

### Resignation Letter

While you may only be thinking about finding a job at this point, there will be a time when you will resign a position. Once again, this letter is to be professional. Open the letter by stating your intent to resign your position and actually state your job title. Research your company's "Length of Notice" policy. Then, calculate when your last day will be, based on that policy. Typically it will be 2 weeks or 30 days. You may want to state why you are leaving; for example, you have decided to return to school, your spouse is being transferred, or you have decided to pursue other opportunities. Do not burn any bridges in this letter. It will remain in your personnel file and you never know when situations may change and you will be seeking employment with the company again. End the letter by thanking your manager and the company for the employment opportunity.

50 South Lincoln Street  
Campus Box #1121  
Washington, PA 15301  
724-503-1070 ext. 4563

March 24, 2006

Jane Shirley  
Human Resources Manager  
Smith, Jones, and Day  
170 Grant Street  
Rockville, MD 22089

COVER LETTER EXAMPLE

Dear Ms. Shirley:

I am about to complete a double major in psychology and business administration with an emphasis on human resources at Washington & Jefferson College and am interested in relocating to the Rockville area. My internship supervisor, John Taylor at 84 Lumber, made me aware of your open position in the Human Resources Department.

As you can see from my résumé, I bring not only the educational background needed for a career in human resources, but I have also gained practical experience. While at 84 Lumber, I rotated among the recruiting, benefits, and training departments. Some specific projects I was involved with included the implementation of a new benefits plan and participation in open enrollment. I attended three regional career fairs and provided training to managers on behavioral interviewing. I firmly believe that these experiences can benefit Smith, Jones, and Day, as I have been trained to be a generalist and find that role very rewarding.

I will be in the Rockville area from April 10–14, and would welcome the opportunity to interview with you. I will follow-up with your office next week to discuss a time when we can meet. Thank you in advance for your time.

Sincerely,

*Timothy Spearing*

Timothy Spearing

Enclosure

50 South Lincoln Street  
Campus Box #1121  
Washington, PA 15301  
724-503-1070 ext. 4563

April 14, 2006

Jane Shirley  
Human Resources Manager  
Smith, Jones, and Day  
170 Grant Street  
Rockville, MD 22089

THANK YOU LETTER EXAMPLE

Dear Ms. Shirley:

Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you on Wednesday, April 14, concerning the human resources generalist position. I am excited about this opportunity and believe the skills and experience I possess will be an asset to Smith, Jones, and Day.

Specifically, my recent experience with a major benefits plan change will directly aid in your company's decision to add dental and vision coverage to your benefits package. I am comfortable communicating to large groups and to individuals one-on-one about the changes, as well as assisting employees in completing the forms. In addition, my experience with employment and recruitment will help your company in such a growth period.

Please feel free to contact me if you have additional questions. Thank you again for your time and consideration. I am looking forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

*Timothy Spearing*

Timothy Spearing

50 South Lincoln Street  
Campus Box #1121  
Washington, PA 15301  
724-503-1070 ext. 4563

ACCEPTANCE LETTER EXAMPLE

May 2, 2006

Jane Shirley  
Human Resources Manager  
Smith, Jones, and Day  
170 Grant Street  
Rockville, MD 22089

Dear Ms. Shirley:

It was certainly wonderful news when you called this afternoon to offer me the human resources generalist position at Smith, Jones, and Day. Please consider this letter my formal acceptance.

I am pleased to accept your offer at a salary of \$29,000. As we agreed, I will begin working on July 7, allowing me to finish a summer computer class that will enhance my skills for Smith, Jones, and Day.

I also understand that I will receive full company pay and benefits during the 12-week training program, and that I am considered probationary during that time.

Thank you again for offering me this wonderful opportunity. Please let me know if I can do anything in advance of my starting date to facilitate the paperwork or if there are any areas you would like me to be reviewing.

Sincerely,

*Timothy Spearing*

Timothy Spearing

50 South Lincoln Street  
Campus Box #1121  
Washington, PA 15301  
724-503-1070 ext. 4563

May 2, 2006

Walter Mellish  
Human Resources Manager  
Greenley Corp., Inc.  
432 Oak Street  
Somecity, MD 16354

WITHDRAWING YOUR RÉSUMÉ FROM  
CONSIDERATION LETTER EXAMPLE

Dear Mr. Mellish:

It was a pleasure to meet with you on April 12 to discuss the human resources generalist position at Greenley Corp., Inc. My time with you and members of the department was both enjoyable and informative.

Our discussions provided me with a much clearer understanding of the responsibilities and typical career path for a generalist with Greenley Corp., Inc. After thinking over this opportunity as well as others, I have decided to withdraw from consideration for the generalist position and to accept an offer from another firm. My decision is based on several factors including the amount of travel the generalist position at Greenley Corp., Inc. requires.

Thank you for your consideration and the opportunity to learn more about Greenley Corp., Inc.

Sincerely,

*Timothy Spearing*

Timothy Spearing

50 South Lincoln Street  
Campus Box #1121  
Washington, PA 15301  
724-503-1070 ext. 4563

May 2, 2006

Robert Cavanaugh  
Director of Human Resources  
Sampson & Sampson Inc.  
45 Smallman Street  
Pittsburgh, PA 15222

REJECTION LETTER EXAMPLE

Dear Mr. Cavanaugh:

I appreciate your offering me the human resources generalist position at Sampson & Sampson Inc. I have, however, decided to accept a position with another company. This decision has been very difficult to make, but after careful deliberation, I feel that this is the best choice for me at this time.

I was very impressed with the employees of Sampson & Sampson and want you to know how much I enjoyed meeting all of you and learning about your organization. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

*Timothy Spearing*

Timothy Spearing

50 South Lincoln Street  
Campus Box #1121  
Washington, PA 15301  
724-503-1070 ext. 4563

May 2, 2004

Jacob Rogers  
Manager  
Old Navy  
Washington Crown Center  
1500 West Chestnut Street  
Washington, PA 15301

RESIGNATION LETTER EXAMPLE

Dear Mr. Rogers:

It is with deep regret that I inform you of my decision to tender my resignation effective May 16. It has been a pleasure working with you and representing the company as a sales associate.

I have accepted an offer with another company. This decision has nothing to do with the exceptional opportunity you have provided for me. You and the company have been more than fair with me, and I genuinely appreciate all of your support.

I wish Old Navy continued success, and I want to thank you for allowing me to be a part of your team. Where possible, I will do whatever I can to aid in a smooth transition.

Sincerely,

*Timothy Spearing*

Timothy Spearing