

COVER LETTERS, RESUMES, AND PERSONAL STATEMENTS

COVER LETTER

- When applying for a job, always include a cover letter.
- A cover letter allows you to give greater detail about a few key points than your resume will allow and also lets you make a personal connection with your prospective employer.
- Your cover letter should be specific to the particular job for which you are applying.
- Never use the same cover letter to apply for more than one job. The employer will be very likely to notice, and this will dilute your letter's effectiveness.
- If possible, try to discover the name of the person you should include in the salutation. Many times this information is hard to find. If this is the case, use a salutation such as Dear Search Committee, Dear Hiring Committee or To Whom It May Concern. Never use simply Mr. or Ms.
- Try to learn as much about your potential employer as possible. This will allow you to expand on your past experiences that are relevant to the position.
- If you are not familiar with particular terms that the job ad describes, find out what they are. Even if you haven't had experience with a term you see in an ad, you can impress an employer by making the effort to learn what it is.

COVER LETTER -- VISUAL ELEMENTS

- Use a standard font that is readable. Don't use a cutesy font like Comic Sans; Times New Roman will work just fine.
- Use your space well. Don't leave a bunch of white space. If you leave space, the employer may think you don't have anything to say.
- Remember that sometimes employers read more than 30 letters and resumes. Try to make it as easy as possible for them.

RESUME

- Make each resume particular to the job for which you are applying.
- Give employers what they want. If they ask for 5 references, give them 5 references, not more. Be selective in your work experience. Unless the ad asks for it, listing 20 jobs if only 5 are relevant to the job you are seeking is unnecessary.
- Try to keep your resume to one page unless the position you are seeking requires extensive experience.
- Describe your accomplishments in active, past-tense verbs.
- Students who haven't had a lot of professional experience may include a section called "relevant coursework." Having never worked as a technical writer may matter less if you can list having done well in a relevant class.

PERSONAL STATEMENT

- Often used for grad. school applications, these are somewhat different from cover letters.
- Often they ask you to say what is impressive and unique about yourself. Think about something that makes you *stand out!* You're creative. So what! Explain *why* you are. Avoid vague abstractions, and work toward giving a memorable anecdote that exemplifies a theme about your character.

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