Use matching paper of good quality for resume, cover letters, reference lists, and envelopes.

Uniform formatting and font style through the resume, cover letter, and reference list demonstrates attention to detail and projects a powerful image to an employer.

Cover Letters should be included as part of a packet that includes a resume and reference list.

PREPARING TO WRITE A COVER LETTER

Use this simple, step-by-step approach to developing cover letters that present your unique skills in a professional manner.

Purpose of a Cover Letter

- Highlights your education and experiences in a professional, business letter format.
- Markets yourself and shows the employer why you are qualified for the position.
- Communicates availability, qualifications, and interest to employers.
- Personalizes your resume by accenting strengths relating to the qualifications desired for the position.
- Serves as a formal letter of application.
- Demonstrates your writing skills.

The Contents of a Cover Letter Must:

- Capture the reader’s attention.
- Make the reader want to learn more about you.
- Explain your reason for interest in this particular job.
- Relate your strengths to the needs of the employer.

Use 9 x 12 inch envelopes so the employer gets your resume and letter without any creases.

They look better and are worth the minimal expense.

Application Packet

Uniform formatting and font style through the resume, cover letter, and reference list demonstrates attention to detail and projects a powerful image to an employer.
Personalization
Do not address your letter to, “To whom it may concern.”

State the position sought, organization name, and if appropriate, the geographic location.

Match your strengths and abilities to the organization’s specific needs.

Provide additional information and details which are not on your resume or expand upon your main selling point(s).

Length
One page, single spaced.

Three to four small to mid-sized paragraphs. Opening and closing paragraphs being smaller than the middle or body paragraphs.

Word Choice
Use positive words and/or action verbs capitalizing on your strengths.

Avoid repetition and/or non-descriptive words including “is,” “or,” “was”.

Do not abbreviate, or use unnecessary jargon.

Sentence Structure
Use concise, specific statements and short paragraphs.

No more than 2 or 3 “I” sentences.

Use varied sentence structure.

Cover Letter Format

Cover Letter Critique

Strengths:
• Starts with a personal reference to make a connection.
• Provides details of skills in several areas of research.
• Includes the name of her mentor and the title of the research project.
• Demonstrates genuine interest in the field and the company.

Elizabeth M. Thomas
700 College Place • Williamsport, PA 17701 • (671) 501-4554

May 27, 2008
Merrick & Co.
Lisa Bokorin
Associate Director, Human Resources
P.O. Box 4
Summerville, PA
19485

Dear Ms. Bokorin:

Upon talking with an employee of yours from the DaVelloe plant, Louis Ett, I am writing to inquire about current job opportunities available with your company at the West Point facility. I am a recent graduate of Lycoming College in Williamsport, PA with a major in chemistry and minor in mathematics. Attention to detail, ability to work with others, experience, and attitude are the qualities of a good chemist. Throughout my college experience, I have used these skills and hope to continue using them for your company.

This past summer, I assisted Dr. Charles Martin, Chairman of the Chemistry Department at Lycoming College, with the investigation and Synthesis of Early Transition Metal Compounds. As a student in this lab, I conducted experiments, maintained the laboratory, performed research, and then prepared my research to other faculty and students at Lycoming College. I also made use of many spectrophotometer-instruments including the IR, NMR, GC-MS, and the UV-Vis.

The field of science has always sparked an interest within me, especially the area of pharmaceutical development and marketing. I am seeking a company that offers growth and advancement while also focusing on service and personal excellence. After reading your company’s mission statement, I feel that I possess the qualities to provide society with products to enhance the quality of life and satisfactorily needs.

Thank you for taking the time to review my credentials. I look forward to hearing from you to arrange a time to meet and discuss how I can be a benefit to Merrick & Company, Inc.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth M. Thomas
Elizabeth M. Thomas

Enclosure: Resume and References

Focus on the Employer

The focus of the Cover Letter should be on the employer whenever possible. Concentrate on the employer’s needs. Tell an employer how you can effect their bottom line. Write about how you can increase profit, reduce cost, enhance their image, or retain customers.

Benjamin M. Hoover
Lycoming College • Box 134 • Williamsport, PA 17701 • hoover@lyco.edu

January 30, 2008
Mr. Anthony Velletta
Executive Director
Central Togas Progress Authority
Towanda, PA 18848

Dear Mr. Velletta:

As a lifelong resident of Togas County, I am familiar with your organization and the great strides that it has made in the area of economic development within the county in recent years. Your success with the Economic Revitalization Project has drawn my attention, and I hope that you will consider me for a position as a Senior Research Analyst for the project. My solid academic background at Lycoming College, my experience as a Research Assistant in the economics department, and my strong work ethic culminated when working on my father’s farm, should reflect the morals that I am able to bring to the Central Togas Progress Authority.

At Lycoming College, I am majoring in economics while pursuing minors in the fields of finance and mathematics. This curriculum has served to prepare me for a career in business research while developing my analytical reasoning skills and teaching me to solve problems. While working as a Research Assistant, I learned firsthand how to conduct research. I have gained experience using computer software to analyze raw data and transfer it into meaningful, presentable data. Several of the projects that I assisted with have been submitted for publication to leading economic journals. An appreciation of science that could greatly benefit our organization in any knowledge of the issues and concepts of the residents of Togas County. I have a sense of the strengths and weaknesses of the region and the personal characteristics of the families that call Togas County home. My familiarity of the region, its economic climate, and its population, provides me with a strong reference point through which to attack the research needed to complete the Economic Revitalization Project.

I look forward to contacting you in the near future in order to set up an interview. This will allow you to become more familiar with my skills, and how they can benefit your organization and the people of Togas County.

Sincerely,

Benchmark M. Hoover

Enclosure: Resume and References

To Increase the Quality of Your Writing:

• Give yourself time to write a good letter.
• Be creative in your first draft and then refine your writing in later drafts.
• Use an outline system to organize your thoughts before you begin writing.
• Avoid long sentences and hone out any unnecessary words.

Proofreading:

• Misspellings, grammatical errors, and improper punctuation are unacceptable.

Your final product must be perfect.

• Do not rely on electronic solely. These programs miss improper punctuation.
• Check for grammatical errors by reading your letter aloud.
• Check for spelling errors by reading the letter backward, one word at a time.
• Have someone else read and critique your letter.

Fresh eyes can more easily find simple mistakes. They can also provide constructive criticism of your writing.
### Use Action Words When Possible

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action Words</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Accomplished</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Achieved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adapted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analyzed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Budgeted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Calculated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaborated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complied</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Composed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conducted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confronted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constructed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contributed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coordinated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corresponded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Counseled</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Created</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultivated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Active Sentence Structure

**Use ACTION words and ACTIVE voice whenever possible.**

Active structure creates excitement and is highly effective in communicating your message.

The MS Word Grammar Checker will identify passive sentences and provide alternative wording choices.

### Your Contact Information

(Top left or right)

- Full Name
- Address
- Phone Number

Using the same format as the contact information on your resume gives the cover letter a professional, uniform appearance.

### Prospective Employer's Information

(Aligned with left margin)

- Contact’s Full Name
- Contact’s Exact Title
- Contact’s Department
- Name of Organization
- Street Address
- City, State, Zip

### Salutation

(Double space below Contact information)

Use Official Title: (Mr., Ms., Mrs., Dr., Rev., etc.) and last name followed by a colon.

Example: Dr. Smith:

The standard way to open a business letter is with Dear, the person's name (with or without a title), and a colon, like this: Dear Mr. Smith:

### Opening Paragraph

**Purpose:** To capture attention, set the tone for the letter, and build a match of your qualifications with the employer's needs.

State the purpose of the letter.

Mention name of mutual friend.

Name the position, department, and company. State source of lead.

### Middle Paragraph(s)

**Purpose:** Communicates main selling points, proves that your skills match employer's needs, creates interests, and illustrates personality.

Point to achievements.

Use action verbs.

Offer proof of skills and abilities.

### Closing Paragraph

**Purpose:** Reemphasizes strengths and makes a request for further action.

State timeline, specific follow-up information, and dates of availability.

Express appreciation for time, effort, and consideration.

**Signature**

(Double space after closing)

Sincerely,

Typed name

Enclosure: Resume, References, etc.

---

### Suzanne C. Knoff

700 College Place · Williamsport, PA 17701 · 570.321.4054 · knoff@yahoo.com

Mr. Randal Carpenter
Manager, College Recruiting
Eastmont's
500 Fifth Avenue, postmark
Williamsport, PA 17702

March 6, 2008

Dear Mr. Carpenter,

I appreciate the time you spent with me on the phone on Friday, March 1, 2008. I found our conversation to be both informative and enjoyable. I would like to be considered for the position of Merchandising Executive Trainer, which was posted on your website on Tuesday, February 26, 2008. I believe that the combination of my educational background, experience in the variety of business environments, and strong work ethic would make me a perfect fit for your team.

My strengths and talents include:

- Earned BA with a double major in Business Administration and Psychology
- Proven ability in small sales
- Worked 30 hours a week while maintaining full-time student status
- Participated in student government

Your position and your ability to work in various business environments complement each other. I have gained experience in small business through my employment with Clarks Sport. In that position, I reached sales goals of three of the four quarters in which I was employed. I have gained management and human relations experience through my internship at the A & W Sales Company. I am an extremely hard worker and believe my education has prepared me to understand new concepts and assume responsibilities.

I appreciate your consideration of my credentials for the position of Merchandising Executive Trainer. It would be an honor to meet personally with you. I will be in Pittsburgh from March 15-16 and would like to arrange a personal interview. If the interview, you are in need of any additional information, please do not hesitate to contact me at 570-321-4054.

Sincerely,

Suzanne C. Knoff

[Signature]

Enclosure: Resume and References

---

### Cover Letter Critique

**Strengths:**

- Referring to phone conversation holds readers interest.
- Bullet point list of strengths and talents is concise and eye catching.
- Listing accomplishment in retail sales proves that candidate can perform in the field.
- Great closing, suggests that a personal meeting is imminent and must be arranged.

**Weakness:**

- Positive results or accomplishments are very important in business and should have been noted in bulleted list.

---

### Cover Letter Critique

**Strengths:**

- Communicates qualifications well.
- Relates strengths to the needs of the employer.

**Weakness:**

- Positive results or accomplishments are very important in business and should have been noted in bulleted list.
10 Tips for Creating Powerful Cover Letters

1. Address your letters to a specific individual with his or her correct title and address. (Note: this may take some research!)

2. Tailor your letter for each situation. Generic letters make little impact and have poor results.

3. Your letters should be employer-centered, not self-centered. Emphasize how you will contribute to the organization, give examples and specifics. Do not focus on how you want to gain skills or experience. Ask yourself, “How can I be of service to this organization?” and make those connections within the letter.

4. Show appreciation and consideration to the employer for reviewing your letter, resume, etc.

5. Make your letters easy to read, professional, and attractive. Effective cover letters can differ greatly in style, because no one style is clearly the “best or most effective.” It is most effective to focus on the content!

6. Cover Letters should compliment your resume, not be redundant of it. Do not rehash what is on your resume. The resume provides your facts, the cover letter communicates your unique fit with the employer.

7. Being assertive works, being pretentious does not. Do not sound overbearing or describe yourself as the perfect candidate.

8. Avoid using definitive phrases such as, “My work is always perfect,” or “I am never late.” Definitive statements are rarely accurate.

9. Demonstrate genuine interest and enthusiasm for the job or company. Companies seek individuals who are personally invested in their work and the field.

10. Do not sabotage yourself with negative self-information. Example: “Despite the fact that I have minimal experience in the field…” Try this approach, “As a mature young professional, I learn quickly and will bring a great deal of enthusiasm to the position.”

---

**Andrew E. Jordan**

Lycoming College Box 154 • Williamsport, PA 17701 • 570-321-4316

April 16, 2008

Mr. Susan Troyan

V.P. of Communications & Marketing

United Way of the Capital Region

One United Way

Huntington, PA 11710

Dear Ms. Troyan:

I am currently completing my senior year at Lycoming College in Williamsport, PA, where I am studying double major in psychology and business administration with a concentration in marketing. It is my goal to pursue an administrative career with a non-profit organization. A few months ago, I talked to Cassie Sensabaugh, a Lycoming College graduate working for the United Way of Lycoming County. I have since done some research and am very interested in pursuing a career with The United Way.

I have valuable volunteer and employment experience that I feel would prove useful to The United Way. I would love to fulfill the skills that I have gained through my education and other experiences to help people. At Lycoming College I maintained a grade point average of 3.3, while working an average of 10 hours per week and volunteering an average of 20 hours per week. As a student, I become involved in and take part in community service programs called First Year. The First Year program is a highly successful program that provides counseling services to troubled youth. I have also held a full-time job every summer since high school. I appreciate the value of hard work and am a very dedicated employee.

I would like to find out more about the possibility of a career with The United Way of the Capital Region. Upon graduation, I will be returning to the Greater Harrisburg area and would appreciate the opportunity to speak with you regarding employment with The United Way. I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Sincerely,

Andrew E. Jordan

Enclosure: Resume

---

**Cover Letter Matter**

A survey by Robert Half International found that 60 percent of executives believe that the cover letter is as critical as the resume.