

COVER LETTERS FOR ART & DESIGN STUDENTS AND ALUMNI

The cover letter is a filter between your resume and portfolio and the intended position. Envision your cover letter as a bridge to your resume and portfolio, or as a magnifying glass held to your resume enlarging, clarifying, or focusing on key parts of your background relative to the position. In that sense, a cover letter's purpose is to encourage your reader to review your resume; the resume in turn exists as a means of inviting you to an interview.

Resumes are **always** accompanied by a cover letter - unless otherwise specified - and are directed to the person responsible for hiring you or another designated contact. Otherwise, address the letter to the person from whom you have requested advice if you are using your cover letter for an information interview, or do your research and call and find out to whom you should address your letter for a direct apply. In general, the cover letter should briefly elaborate on your accomplishments *relative to the actual or desired position*. You should highlight prior experience that will make your background "come alive." Strive to integrate your work and portfolio experience with your academic background.

It is important that you research the position for which you are applying. Study the organization's literature/annual report and/or web site before you write your letter so that you can present yourself as someone who will be a perfect fit for the organization. Speak with alumni from Ringling and gain their insights on the employer and position

For networking letters, if someone you know refers you to the hiring source, mention the referral in the first paragraph. Also, in closing your letter, don't use the "I may be contacted at..." format. Say what you will do next: "I will call you within the next two weeks." This is a good, proactive stance.

In your letter, you may request more information about the organization and, more specifically, positions within the organization. On the other hand, letters requesting advice from a networking contact, alumni, friends, relatives, and others - "research/informational interviews" – you should not ask for employment or an internship; instead, stick to requests for information and referrals or insights into position hunting strategies.

Guidelines

- Find out the name and title of the person to whom you're writing and be sure you have the correct spelling; avoid 'to whom it may concern' letters!
- Use your own style.
- Be concise, one page is maximum.
- Use simple language, not flowery phrases.
- Show your distinctiveness and fit for the job/organization.
- Triple check all grammar, punctuation and spelling!
- Use Active voice only.
- Use the same paper and font for your cover letter as you did for your resume.
- Be sure to sign your cover letter.
- Put "encl.: resume" at the very end of your cover letter.
- If you are sending an electronic resume as an attachment, your cover letter IS your email.

Format and structure of your cover letter

Each cover letter is ideally four paragraphs, each responding to ‘unvoiced’ questions. There is a natural flow from one paragraph to the other.

Questions to answer in your art and design cover letters

PARAGRAPH 1: Why are you writing? How did you get the employer's name? Where did you find their job or internship listing? Who referred you? What position are you applying for?

[This is a critical introductory paragraph. Do not tell the reader too much as first, just the essential reasons why you are writing. HINT: Try to grab the reader’s attention in a positive way and set an upbeat tone.]

PARAGRAPH 2: Why are you qualified for the position you are applying for? What have you done that applies to this art job or internship position? Why should the reader look at your enclosed resume and / or portfolio?

[This paragraph is essentially a brief distillation of the most salient parts of your resume relative to the requirements of the position. HINT: highlight those critical parts of your background, as evidenced on your resume, that address the core parts of the job or internship description.]

PARAGRAPH 3: Why are you further interested in this position or motivated for this position? Why are you interested in this particular job? Why do you want to work in this organization? What is special about you that should be considered for this position? What sort of fit is there between your experience and this job/organization?

[Continue to highlight selective and appropriate parts of your resume or mention your reasons and motivations for applying. HINT: Use this paragraph to validate additional core skills of your background and experience and why this position excites you.]

PARAGRAPH 4: What will *you* do next? When will *you* contact the employer in follow-up? Why will *you* be contacting the employer to set up an interview or inquire if they need more information on your candidacy?

[Tell the reader what they can expect from you next: A phone call to set up an interview or inquire if further information on your background is required prior to your interview. HINT: Always end your letter positively and pro-actively. Remember: the cover letter exists as a means to entice your reader to review your resume and portfolio; your resume exists as a means to entice your reader to meet with you during an interview.]

Special technique: Try this easy method: Just put the job or internship description on your desk to one side and your resume on the other. Envision the cover letter as a bridge between the two documents. When you review the job or internship description underline or highlight the critical parts of it as reflected in your resume and portfolio. Then, when you write the cover letter, relate and filter one to the other through the four paragraphs as described above.

HINT: Have friends read your cover letter without looking at the job or internship description. They should be able to reconstruct in their mind the critical parts of the position **and** your resume.

Below is an outline format and content guide for a cover letter. These samples will give you a ‘sense’ of how to structure your letter; these are not necessarily models to copy. Develop your own appropriate tone and style within the format suggestions and style techniques outlined in this guide.

Sample cover letter format and content

Today's Date

Your return address, usually the one on your resume

City, State, Zip

Full Name of person to whom you are writing

Title/Division/Organization

Address

City, State, Zip

Salutation: Dear Mr./Ms. last name only [always followed by a ':' not a ',']

In the first paragraph tell why you are writing, who referred you, and/or mention the specific position you are applying for.

In the second paragraph, draw attention to anything in your background that specifically makes you a viable candidate for the position. Amplify or clarify the achievements on your resume and / or portfolio, or if the letter is in response to an employment listing, indicate how your experience or education fits the requirements of the position. Refer briefly, or summarize, parts of your past experience that are significant and important as qualifications for the duties of the position.

In the third paragraph, continue citing examples from your background, perhaps your studies and courses, and indicate your excitement or motivation for the position. Briefly state your desire for a career in the employer's area/organization/industry.

In the fourth paragraph, say what **you** will do next. Convey that **you** will call or write, perhaps to set up an interview, or to inquire the employer for setting up an interview. Be proactive in the closing paragraph!

Closing, [Sincerely Yours, or Sincerely,]

(Signature)

Your Name Typed

Encl: resume, portfolio

Saving your cover letter in ASCII

Some organizations may require that you attach your resume and cover letter to an email as an ASCII (American Standard Code for Information Exchange) file or most currently, you can simply attach both your cover letter and resume to your email, or have your cover letter as your email with your resume attached. Formatting in ASCII strips your document of all formatting codes and makes it easy for someone with a different type of word processing software to read.

1. Save your resume as a regular document.
2. Take out any bold, underlines, italics, tabs (use your spacebar to move things over instead).
3. Likewise, be careful about using bullets or other special characters (>, +, * are acceptable).
4. Go to "save as" and:
 - o in WordPerfect (PC) select ASCII Text
 - o in WordPerfect (Mac) select Text Export
 - o in Microsoft Word select MS-DOS with Line Breaks
5. Be sure your ASCII version doesn't replace your formatted version! Remember to save it under another name.

Sample cover letters

As with the resume samples, these examples illustrate possible wording, tone, and style. Your style, tone, and content will be uniquely yours but these samples, and others available on web sites and through guides cited at the end of this section, will give you additional ideas. As with your resumes, have a trained counselor or professional review your documents for accuracy, style, and content.

Since there are three primary ways to apply for a position, there are three essential forms of cover letter: the Direct Response to a posted listing, the Direct Apply for a projected position, and Networking. Networking again splits into two forms: networking for career insights, and networking for job or internship hunting advice.

Direct Response cover letter 1

May 14, 2009
1387 Fifth Street
New York, NY 02153

Name of Person
Person's Job Title
Name of Organization
Address of Organization
City, State, Zip

Dear Ms. Smith:

Please accept my application for the position of Art Sales Representative as advertised in the May 10th edition of the *New York Times*. I bring to your position advanced customer service experience, sound communications skills, and an outstanding track record in art sales.

As indicated in my enclosed resume, the experience of my last summer job introduced me to the challenges associated with managing people and gave me experience providing excellent customer service to real customers. While at DCA Gallery, I honed my art sales techniques after completing a rigorous training program that emphasized quality interactions with clients. Additionally, I developed artists' briefs and texts for the gallery's web site that highlighted represented artists. As a result of these and related gallery talks and presentations, I developed a repeat customer base, and won several awards for realizing and exceeding my monthly quotas. I am certain that my success in a high end art gallery echo and anticipate the problems and challenges of your gallery.

Supplementing this practical experience, I possess a strong arts background and work ethic, and am comfortable with academic achievements. I have been blessed with a logical and creative mind, common sense, and a goal-oriented mentality, and I enjoy working both independently and as part of a team. I am certain that the collective approach to work tasks at the DCA Gallery will provide an outstanding foundation for my future career in art marketing. Finally, I know from my sports and community service experiences that teams, rather than individuals, win.

DCA Gallery is looking for people to participate in its growth, join in its change, and be responsive to its customer needs. I know I can contribute to these goals. I will call your office in a few days to inquire if your need additional information on my background – writing samples, references, transcript – and evaluate the option of setting up an interview at your convenience.

Thank you for your consideration. I look forward to meeting with you soon.

Sincerely,

Your signature

Your name typed

Encl: resume

Direct Response cover letter 2

January 15, 2009
1800 Greensborough Road
Sarasota, FL 34234

Name of Person
Person's Job Title
Name of Organization
Address of Organization
City, State, Zip

Dear Mr. Jones:

Please accept my application for the position of Graphic Designer / Production Assistant as recently listed on your web site. After reading your listing I was pleased to realize that I possess the design, computer, character conceptualization and color skills you require.

You will note on the attached resume, that I am completing my BFA at Ringling College of Art and Design and majoring in **Graphic and Interactive Communication**. I successfully completed specialized courses in layout, production, book design and publication, and color. These courses all involved the use and mastery of computer graphic programs such as Adobe Photoshop, Illustrator, and InDesign. Additionally, I am an accomplished concept designer and character developer and have had some courses in computer animation. Finally, my senior thesis is drawing on all these skills as I design and present story boards and graphic mock ups of illustrations for a children's book.

Supplementing these skills, you will note that last summer my internship introduced me to the challenges associated with working in a graphic art position at WWW Advertising Agency. While at WWW I completing a rigorous training program developed layouts, color separations, type face specs, and Photoshop mock-ups for final production. I worked under strict deadlines and quality standards. I am comfortable working as part of a production team and enjoy and thrive in fast-paced settings. Your position will build upon my academic and practical training and provide a firm foundation for my future career in graphic arts.

I will call your office in a few days to inquire if your need additional information on my background – visual samples, references, transcript – and evaluate the option of setting up an interview at your convenience.

Thank you for your consideration. I look forward to meeting with you soon.

Sincerely,

Your signature

Your name typed

Encl: resume, portfolio

Direct Apply cover letter

February 20, 2009
1800 Greensborough Road
Sarasota, FL 34234

Mr. John Smith
Creative Director
Graphics Limited
15 South Street
Atlanta, GA 30301

Dear Mr. Smith:

As part of my job searching process, I am writing to inquire if you have any current or future anticipated openings for an illustrator, designer, or lay-out page developer in your Atlanta or Chicago offices.

My enclosed resume clearly outlines my experience as a concept and graphic designer using standard and technology media. For example, I enhanced my design skills as a graphic during several summers as a production assistant for Macon Designs. Aside from completing time-sensitive production work, I was entrusted with photographing and scaling images for a special magazine shoot on college students and their first jobs. This involved critically identifying subjects, story lines, and writing copy for this very popular edition. In addition, I trained some part-time free lance assistants and successfully marketed the final work to several out-of-state publications. Finally, I have taken several courses in visual development at Ringling. My art and design training, combined with my proven skills in communications, enhance my candidacy with the creative department with your firm.

Complementing these experiences, I have had additional coursework in marketing and copy writing. I am also completing a thesis on advertising photographs as cultural markers. My experience on this project has verified my skills in identifying and using images to embody and reflect clients' needs while embodying a crisp graphic edge. I have enclosed a few samples as a link at the bottom of this letter. Finally, a creative / graphics position with your firm will provide an outstanding foundation for my future career as a designer.

I will call you in a few weeks to see if you require further information on my background and qualifications such as transcripts, supplementary portfolio, or letters of recommendation. I look for to speaking with you and working with you in the near future.

Sincerely yours,

Hank Lyons

Encl.: resume, portfolio link: www//ringling.collegecentral.509u4.com

Networking Cover Letter for career information

December 10, 2008
15 Seventh Avenue, N.W.
Durham, NC 27710

Ms. Shelly Mears, Director
Micron Interiors
1717 Hathaway Blvd.
Armonk, NY 10607

Dear Ms. Mears:

As a graduating senior from Ringling College's Interior Design department, I am writing to seek your advice about the field of interior design industry. I found your name in the Alumni Network at the Ringling through the Career Center.

My B.F.A in Interior Design, my experience over the summers and during the year as an assistant in a lighting firm with a local design firm, and my overall love and skills of working on specialize design projects, prompt me to pursue a career in the field. I am curious as to whether there is a need for people with my skills in the corporate setting: I did an exciting study of green design for one of my courses at Ringling and was intrigued by its commercial applications. Should I continue my education at the graduate level or seek entry level positions? Is my training from Ringling sufficient at this point for entry into the field? How did you make the transition from Ringling to the commercial interior design industry?

I would like to meet with you briefly to learn your insights on the commercial interior design industry, the personality needed to succeed in corporate settings, and the dynamics of careers for women in this field.

I have enclosed a copy of my resume just to give you an idea of my background and how I am presenting myself. I will call your office to arrange a brief appointment, at your convenience. I look forward to meeting you and learning from you.

Sincerely,
(Signature)

Joan Riley

Encl: resume

Networking Cover Letter for job hunting advice

September 24, 2008
Box 897 Greensborough Road
Sarasota, FL 34234

Ms. Alice Jones
Assistant Director
Hightop Animation Group
89 South Road
Cambridge, MA 02134

Dear Ms. Jones:

In a recent conversation with Loretta Jones at your firm, she encouraged me to contact you as I continue to explore options and ideas for animation design after graduation. She thought that your insights, advice, and recommendations would be particularly valuable for me as an international student.

I am drawn to the various computer animation techniques and processes in economics and their applications especially in the entertainment and communication industries. As reflected on my enclosed resume, my course work in computer animation at Ringling College enhanced my abilities and competencies; my thesis will continue my interests in animation focusing on environmental implications through graphic character designs and interactions. This topic, while tentative, reflects my studies at Ringling where I learned, first hand, Maya effects and the value of working under strict deadlines. Moreover, I enjoy the processes of character and concept design and have developed a facility of translating ideas into visual realities. The link on the bottom of my resume will take you directly to my electronic portfolio including animation samples. I believe these examples verify my abilities and skills in character development, thematic expression, graphic design, and computer animation.

I would like to meet with you, or if your schedule does not permit, speak with you on the phone, and gain your perspective and recommendations on the best strategies for pursuing entry-level options in computer animation in New England. I believe that Hightop Animation Group sent an internship listing to the career center. Your advice on the best ways to enhance my candidacy for Hightop Group and related firms would be invaluable.

I look forward to speaking with you and learning from you. I will call you in a few days and establish an interview at your convenience. Thank you in advance for your kindness and assistance.

Sincerely yours,

Bonnie Smith

Encl: resume

Not all art and design job and internship letters during your search are cover letters. There are some necessary letters that cover a variety of situations that the job hunter might expect: follow-up after an interview, response to a job rejection, response to a job offer, and refusing a job offer.

Letter after an interview

April 10, 2008
Box 3928 Greensborough Road
New York, NY 23456

Ms. Kaye Jaeger
Project Popcorn
209 Knaul Ave.
Syracuse, NY 13203

Dear Ms. Jaeger:

It was great to meet with you and the creative staff to discuss book design opportunities through the Production Assistant position with Popcorn. Your insights into the role of client interactions, presentations, and Popcorn's style indicators, were inspiring.

I am motivated to further develop my skills with Popcorn and apply my proven abilities in color, topography, and page design. It is my firm belief that the computer enhanced production model, combined with creative and client-centered work is key. In fact, my summer job with Sarasota Publishing introduced me to the power of building graphic effectiveness under strict deadlines. This experience would allow me to immediately contribute as a Production Assistant. Furthermore, I am familiar with the rigors of computer generated graphics and mock-ups, would not be new to me. I am particularly excited by the broad range of demands working in one of Popcorn's regional offices provides.

I anticipate your decision within the next two weeks. I am very enthusiastic about joining Popcorn and its design work with clients.

Sincerely,

(Signature)

Susan K. Andrews

Letter after a job rejection

April 12, 2008
82 Abbot Way
Chelmsford, MA 07712

Mr. Jon Campbell
Director of Art
XYZ Design Group
42 Learners Lane
Collegeville, OH 56902

Dear Mr. Campbell:

Thank you for your letter of April 10 informing me of your decision to offer the position of Production Artist to another candidate. I am sure, as you indicated, that the applicant pool contained quite a few qualified candidates.

I would appreciate your keeping my credentials and sample portfolio/dvd in your active file against the possibility of a future opening. I was most impressed by the quality of your firm, its dedicated staff, team approach, and the XYZ Design philosophy. I feel strongly that my background in advertising management and creative expressions, advanced courses in graphics, animation, and color, combined with my progressing summer duties in various design firms qualifies me as a viable entry-level candidate at your firm.

I have enclosed another copy of my resume for your files, and will call your office in a few months to see if any other positions in my area have become available. Again, thank you and your staff for your consideration during the interview process. I look forward to meeting with you again, and hopefully working with you in the future.

Sincerely,

(Signature)

Henry Jones

Encl: resume

Letter accepting a job offer

July 20, 2008
16 Cotton Way
Scottsville, MN 6871 1

Ms. Susan Walters
Director, Human Resources
Fun Products, Inc.
Sperry Building, 38th Floor
New York, NY 10019

Dear Ms. Walters:

I am delighted that you want me to join Fun Products as a Design Assistant in your creative department. Your phone call this morning really made my day!

To review our conversation, I would be starting at Fun Products on August 20, at an annual salary of \$39,000, with a review after six months. My primary duties will be in developing initial concept designs and finished prototypes for production review and working on various on-going products with your creative staff. I will bring the required documents verifying both my citizenship and graduation from Ringling during my personnel meeting and tax from completion.

I am excited about joining the Fun Products design team. I will, as agreed, call you in a week with my final decision. I will contact you before then if I have any questions about the position.

Sincerely,

(Signature)

Dan Cantor

Letter rejecting a job offer

March 11, 2008
Box 29 Greensborough Road
Sarasota, FL 34234

Henry Jones
Head, Creative Department
XXYX Publications
Reston, VA 07253

Dear Mr. Jones:

Thank you for your recent letter and offer for position with your firm. I was excited and pleased when received your offer and gratified that my background and skills matched your needs.

However, I recently received an offer from one of the other publication organizations I was interviewing with. After reviewing your very generous and kind opportunity against the other option, I have reluctantly decided to decline your position. I can assure you, it has not been an easy decision for me. But in reviewing and comparing the situations, benefits, and potential of both positions, I believe that my needs and personal and professional growth as an illustrator will be best met with another organization.

Please extend my gratitude to staff for their time and generous insights. I am sure in the future our paths will cross again. I look forward to potential professional interactions with you and your firm.

Thank you again for your offer. I look for to meeting you again someday soon in a professional capacity.

Sincerely yours,

John Smith