

Cover letters: types and samples

The guidelines here apply to both hard copy correspondence and e-mail. (To decide which to use, see [e-mail in your job search](#).) The main difference between e-mail and hard copy correspondence is format: your signature block (address, etc.) goes below your name in e-mail, while it goes at the top of the page on hard copy. Of course you won't have a handwritten signature on e-mail, but don't forget this on hard copy.

All cover letters should:

Explain why you are sending a resume.

Don't send a resume without a cover letter.

Don't make the reader guess what you are asking for; be specific: Do you want a summer internship opportunity, or a permanent position at graduation; are you inquiring about future employment possibilities?

Tell specifically how you learned about the position or the organization — a flyer posted in your department, a web site, a family friend who works at the organization. It is appropriate to mention the name of someone who suggested that you write.

Convince the reader to look at your resume.

The cover letter will be seen first.

Therefore, it must be very well written and targeted to that employer.

Call attention to elements of your background — education, leadership, experience — that are relevant to a position you are seeking. Be as specific as possible, using examples.

Reflect your attitude, personality, motivation, enthusiasm, and communication skills.

Provide or refer to any information specifically requested in a job advertisement that might not be covered in your resume, such as availability date, or reference to an attached writing sample.

Indicate what you will do to follow-up.

- **In a letter of application** — applying for an advertised opening — applicants often say something like "I look forward to hearing from you." However, if you have further contact info (e.g. phone number) and if the employer hasn't said "no phone calls," it's better to take the initiative to follow-up, saying something like, "I will contact you in the next two weeks to see if you require any additional information regarding my qualifications."
- **In a letter of inquiry** — asking about the possibility of an opening — don't assume the employer will contact you. You should say something like, "I will contact you in two weeks to learn more about upcoming employment opportunities with (name of organization)." Then mark your calendar to make the call.

Sample [Cover Letter Format Guidelines](#) (below).

Cover letters generally fall into one of two categories:

1. **Letter of application:** applying for a specific, advertised opening. See:
[Sample 3.1: letter of application following personal meeting, hard copy version](#)
[Sample 3.2: letter of application for advertised position, e-mail version](#)
[Sample 3.3: letter of application for advertised position, e-mail version](#)
[Sample 3.4: letter of application for advertised position, hard copy version](#)
2. **Letter of inquiry:** expressing interest in an organization, but you are not certain if there are current openings. See:
[Sample 3.5: letter of inquiry about employment possibilities, e-mail version](#)
[Sample 3.6: letter of inquiry about internship opportunities, hard copy version](#)

Information-seeking letters and follow-up

To draft an effective cover letter, you need to indicate that you know something about the employing organization. Sometimes, even with research efforts, you don't have enough information to do this. In such a case it is appropriate to write requesting information.

See [Sample 4.1: Information seeking letter, hard copy version](#).

After you receive the desired information you can then draft a follow-up letter that:

- **Thanks** the sender for the information;
- **Markets** why you would be a good job candidate for that organization based on the information; and
- **Explains** why you are sending your resume.

See [Sample 5.2: Follow up letter to information seeking meeting](#).

Also see:

[Guidelines for using e-mail in your job search](#)

[Guidelines for correspondence in your job search](#)

[Researching employers — why and how](#)

[Thank you / follow up letters](#)

Samples

Cover Letter Format Guidelines:

Your Street Address
City, State Zip Code
Telephone Number
Email Address

Month, Day, Year

Mr./Ms./Dr. FirstName LastName
Title
Name of Organization
Street or P. O. Box Address
City, State Zip Code

Dear Mr./Ms./Dr. LastName:

Opening paragraph: State why you are writing; how you learned of the organization or position, and basic information about yourself.

2nd paragraph: Tell why you are interested in the employer or type of work the employer does (Simply stating that you are interested does not tell why, and can sound like a form letter). Demonstrate that you know enough about the employer or position to relate your background to the employer or position. Mention specific qualifications which make you a good fit for the employer's needs. This is an opportunity to explain in more detail relevant items in your resume. Refer to the fact that your resume is enclosed. Mention other enclosures if such are required to apply for a position.

3rd paragraph: Indicate that you would like the opportunity to interview for a position or to talk with the employer to learn more about their opportunities or hiring plans. State what you will do to follow up, such as telephone the employer within two weeks. If you will be in the employer's location and could offer to schedule a visit, indicate when. State that you would be glad to provide the employer with any additional

information needed. Thank the employer for her/his consideration.

Sincerely,

(Your handwritten signature)

Your name typed

Enclosure(s) (refers to resume, etc.)

(Note: the contents of your letter might best be arranged into four paragraphs. Consider what you need to say and use good writing style. See the following examples for variations in organization and layout.)

Sample 3.1 — Letter of application, hard copy version

E-2 Apartment Heights Dr.
Blacksburg, VA 24060
(540) 555-0101
abcd@vt.edu

February 22, 2007

Dr. Michael Jr. Rhodes
Principal, Wolftrap Elementary School
1205 Beulah Road
Vienna, VA 22182

Dear Dr. Rhodes:

I enjoyed our conversation on February 18th at the Family and Child Development seminar on teaching young children and appreciated your personal input about helping children attend school for the first time. This letter is to follow-up about the Fourth Grade Teacher position as discussed at the seminar. I will be completing my Bachelor of Science Degree in Family and Child Development with a concentration in Early Childhood Education at Virginia Tech in May of 2007, and will be available for employment at that time.

The teacher preparation program at Virginia Tech includes a full academic year of student teaching. Last semester I taught second grade and this semester, fourth grade. These valuable experiences have afforded me the opportunity to:

- develop lesson plans on a wide range of topics and varying levels of academic ability,
- work with emotionally and physically challenged students in a total inclusion program,
- observe and participate in effective classroom management approaches,
- assist with parent-teacher conferences, and
- complete In-Service sessions on diversity, math and reading skills, and community relations.

Through my early childhood education courses I have had the opportunity to work in a private day care facility, Rainbow Riders Childcare Center, and in Virginia Tech's Child Development Laboratory. Both these facilities are NAEYC accredited and adhere to the highest standards. At both locations, my responsibilities included leading small and large group activities, helping with lunches and snacks, and implementing appropriate activities. Both experiences also provided me with extensive exposure to the implementation of developmentally appropriate activities and materials.

I look forward to putting my knowledge and experience into practice in the public school system. Next week I will be in Vienna, and I plan to call you then to answer any questions that you may have. I can be reached before then at (540) 555-7670. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,
(handwritten signature)

Donna Harrington

Enclosure

Sample 3.2 — Letter of application, e-mail version

April 14, 2006

Mr. William Jackson
Employment Manager
Acme Pharmaceutical Corporation
13764 Jefferson Parkway
Roanoke, VA 24019
jackson@acmepharmaceutical.com

Dear Mr. Jackson:

From your company's web site I learned about your need for a sales representative for the Virginia, Maryland, and North Carolina areas. I am very interested in this position with Acme Pharmaceuticals, and believe that my education and employment background are appropriate for the position.

While working toward my master's degree, I was employed as a sales representative with a small dairy foods firm. I increased my sales volume and profit margin appreciably while at Farmer's Foods, and I would like to repeat that success in the pharmaceutical industry. I have a strong academic background in biology and marketing, and think that I could apply my combination of knowledge and experience to the health industry. I will complete my master's degree in marketing in mid-May and will be available to begin employment in early June.

Enclosed is a copy of my resume, which more fully details my qualifications for the position.

I look forward to talking with you regarding sales opportunities with Acme Pharmaceuticals. Within the next week I will contact you to confirm that you received my email and resume and to answer any questions you may have.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,
Lynn A. Johnson
5542 Hunt Club Lane, #1
Blacksburg, VA 24060
(540) 555-8082
lajohnson@vt.edu

Resume attached as MS Word document (assuming company web site instructed applicants to do this)

Sample 3.3 — Letter of application, e-mail version

March 14, 2008

Ms. Charlene Prince
Director of Personnel
Large National Bank Corporation
Roanoke, VA 24040
cprince@largebank.com

Dear Ms. Prince:

As I indicated in our telephone conversation yesterday, I would like to apply for the marketing research position you advertised in the March 12th edition of the Roanoke Times and World News. With my undergraduate research background, my training in psychology and sociology, and my work experience, I believe I could make a valuable contribution to Large National Bank Corporation in this position.

In May I will complete my Bachelor of Science in Psychology with a minor in Sociology from Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University. As part of the requirements for this degree, I am involved in a senior marketing research project that has given me experience interviewing and surveying research subjects and assisting with the analysis of the data collected. I also have completed a course in statistics and research methods.

In addition to academic work, my experience also includes working part-time as a bookkeeper in a small independent bookstore with an annual budget of approximately \$150,000. Because of the small size of this business, I have been exposed to and participated in most aspects of managing a business, including advertising and marketing. As the bookkeeper, I produced monthly sales reports that allow the owner/buyer to project seasonal inventory needs. I also assisted with the development of ideas for special promotional events and calculated book sales proceeds after each event in order to evaluate its success.

I believe that the combination of my business experience and social science research training is well-suited to the marketing research position you described. I have enclosed a copy of my resume with additional information about my qualifications. Thank you for your consideration. I look forward to receiving your reply.

Sincerely,
Jessica Lawrence
250 Prices Fork Road
Blacksburg, VA 24060
(540) 555-1234
jessica.lawrence@vt.edu

Resume text included in email below and attached as MS Word document

Sample 3.4 — Letter of application, hard copy version

1000 Terrace View Apts.
Blacksburg, VA 24060
(540) 555-4523
stevemason@vt.edu

March 25, 2005

Mr. John Wilson
Personnel Director
Anderson Construction Company
3507 Rockville Pike
Rockville, MD 20895

Dear Mr. Wilson:

I read in the March 24th Washington Post classified section of your need for a Civil Engineer or Building Construction graduate for one of your Washington, DC, area sites. I will be returning to the Washington area after graduation in May and believe that I have the necessary credentials for the project.

I have worked at various levels in the construction industry every summer since the 8th grade. As you can see from my resume, I worked several summers as a general laborer, gradually moved up to a carpenter, and last summer I worked as assistant construction manager on a 100 million dollar job.

In addition to this practical experience, I will complete requirements for my Building Construction degree in May. As you may know, Virginia Tech is one of the few universities in the country that offers such a specialized degree for the construction industry. I am confident that my Building Construction degree, along

with my years of construction industry experience, make me an excellent candidate for your job.

The Anderson Construction Company projects are familiar to me, and my aspiration is to work for a company that has your excellent reputation. I would welcome the opportunity to interview with you. I will be in the Washington area during the week of April 12th and would be available to speak with you at that time. In the next week to ten days I will contact you to answer any questions you may have.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,
(handwritten signature)
Steve Mason

Enclosure

Sample 3.5 — Letter of inquiry about employment possibilities, e-mail version

December 12, 2007

Mr. Robert Burns
President, Template Division
MEGATEK Corporation
9845 Technical Way
Arlington, VA 22207
burns@megatek.com

Dear Mr. Burns:

I learned of MEGATEK through online research using the CareerSearch database through Career Services at Virginia Tech where I am completing my Master's degree in Mechanical Engineering. From my research on your web site, I believe there would be a good fit between my skills and interests and your needs. I am interested in a software engineering position upon completion of my degree in May 2008.

As a graduate student, I am one of six members on a software development team where we are writing a computer aided aircraft design program for NASA. My responsibilities include designing, coding, and testing of a graphical portion of the program which requires the use of GIARO for graphics input and output. I have a strong background in computer aided design, software development, and engineering, and believe that these skills would benefit the designing and manufacturing aspects of Template software. Enclosed is my resume which further outlines my qualifications.

My qualifications make me well suited to the projects areas in which your division of MEGATEK is expanding efforts. I would appreciate the opportunity to discuss a position with you, and will contact you in a week or ten days to answer any questions you may have and to see if you need any other information from me such as a company application form or transcripts. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,
William Stevens
123 Ascot Lane
Blacksburg, VA 24060
(540) 555-2556
WStevens@vt.edu

Resume attached as MS Word document

Sample 3.6 — Letter of inquiry about internship opportunities, hard copy version

2343 Blankinship Road
Blacksburg, VA 24060
(540) 555-2233

StacyLeeGimble@vt.edu

January 12, 2006

Ms. Sylvia Range
Special Programs Assistant
Marion County Family Court Wilderness Challenge
303 Center Street
Marion, VA 24560

Dear Ms. Range:

I am a junior at Virginia Tech, working toward my bachelor's degree in family and child development. I am seeking an internship for this summer 2006, and while researching opportunities in the field of criminal justice and law, I found that your program works with juvenile delinquents. I am writing to inquire about possible internship opportunities with the Marion County Family Court Wilderness Challenge.

My work background and coursework have supplied me with many skills and an understanding of dealing with the adolescent community; for example:

- I worked as a hotline assistant for a local intervention center. I counseled teenagers about personal concerns and referred them, when necessary, to appropriate professional services for additional help.
- I have been active at my university as a resident hall assistant, which requires me to establish rapport with fifty residents and advise them on personal matters, as well as university policies. In addition, I develop social and educational programs and activities each semester for up to 200 participants.

My enclosed resume provides additional details about my background.

I will be in the Marion area during my Spring break, March 6 - March 10. I will call you next week to see if it would be possible to meet with you in early March to discuss your program.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,
(handwritten signature)
Stacy Lee Gimble

Encl.

Sample 4.1 — Information seeking letter, hard copy version

23 Roanoke Street
Blacksburg, VA 24060
(540) 555-1123
email: K.Walker@vt.edu

October 23, 2006

Mr. James G. Webb
Delon Hampton & Associates
800 K Street, N.W., Suite 720
Washington, DC 20001-8000

Dear Mr. Webb:

I will be graduating from Virginia Tech with a Bachelor's degree in Architecture in May 2007, and am researching employment opportunities in the Washington area. I obtained your name from VT CareerLink, Career Services' Alumni database. I very much appreciate your volunteering to help students with job search information, and I hope that your schedule will permit you to provide me with some advice. I am particularly interested in historic preservation and understand that your firm does work in this area. I am also interested in learning how the architects in your firm began their careers. My resume is enclosed simply to give you some information about my background and project work.

I will call you in two weeks to arrange a time to speak to you by telephone or perhaps visit your office if that would be convenient. I will be in the Washington area during the week of November 21. I very much appreciate your time and consideration of my request, and I look forward to talking with you.

Sincerely,
(handwritten signature)
Kristen Walker

Encl.

Sample 5.2 — Follow-up letter to information seeking meeting, email version

November 30, 2006

Mr. James G. Webb
Delon Hampton & Associates
800 K Street, N.W., Suite 720
Washington, DC 20001-8000
webb@delon.com

Dear Mr. Webb:

Thank you so much for taking time from your busy schedule to meet with me last Tuesday. It was very helpful to me to learn so much about the current projects of Delon Hampton & Associates and the career paths of several of your staff. I appreciate your reviewing my portfolio and encouraging my career plans. I also enjoyed meeting Beth Ormond, and am glad to have her suggestions on how I can make the most productive use of my last semester in college.

Based on what I learned from my visit to your firm and other research I have done, I am very interested in being considered for employment with your firm in the future. I will be available to begin work after I graduate in May 2003. As you saw from my portfolio, I have developed strong skills in the area of historical documentation and this is a good match for the types of projects in which your firm specializes. I have enclosed a copy of my resume to serve as a reminder of my background, some of which I discussed with you when we met.

During the next few months I will stay in contact with you in hopes that there may be an opportunity to join your firm. Thank you again for your generous help.

Sincerely,
Kristin Walker
23 Roanoke Street
Blacksburg, VA 24060
(540) 555-1123
KWalker@vt.edu