

# Cover Letters and Thank You Notes

A cover letter is often the first item an employer sees when you apply for a position, and it can establish the tone for the rest of your application. Following up any professional interaction with an effective thank you note will help set you apart from other candidates and also help you build and maintain a professional network.

## Cover letter content and format

A carefully constructed and concisely written cover letter conveys your ability to communicate effectively in writing. It also demonstrates your interest in and qualifications for the position. An ideal cover letter is:

- Individually tailored to a specific position
- Addressed to an individual or role (i.e. Hiring Manager)
- Usually one page in length
- Written in a conversational style with short sentences
- Closed with a request for action and a “Thank You” for consideration
- Signed in ink if mailed through the postal service

Your Present Address  
City, State Zip Code

Date

Name of individual  
Job title of individual  
Organization Name  
Street Address of P.O. Box  
City, State Zip Code

Dear Mr./Ms/Dr. \_\_\_\_\_:

**First paragraph:** Why are you writing? Let them know what you are applying for, why you’re interested, and how you meet their qualifications.

**Middle paragraphs:** Take the next paragraph or two to give more detail about the major areas you introduced. Don’t repeat your resume; simply highlight the most distinctive pieces. Since a cover letter is in prose format rather than brief bullet points, you can use more qualitative statements and provide an overview of your collective relevant experience.

**Last paragraph:** Reiterate your interest and focus on how you can meet the employer’s needs, not what the position will do for you. Then, let them know you would be excited to speak with them in person. Without using exclamation points, show some enthusiasm. Let them know the best ways to reach you and thank them for their time.

Sincerely,

(your signature in blue or black ink)

Full name typed

# Cover Letter Samples

Ariel Wyatt  
1111 Wheelock Student Center  
Tacoma, WA 98416

March 20, 2012

LuAnn Smith, Human Resources Director  
Museum of Glass  
1801 Dock Street  
Tacoma, WA 98402

Dear Ms. Smith:

As a student at the University of Puget Sound, the Museum of Glass is a "must see" on the list of Tacoma sites whenever family or friends come to visit. Whether we are walking across the Bridge of Glass, watching visiting glass artists showcase their technique in the Hot Shop, or touring one of the exhibitions, the museum is always a hit. Therefore it is with great enthusiasm that I submit my resume as an application for the Visitor Services Assistant Manager position. I welcome an opportunity to bring my customer service and supervisory experience to the Museum of Glass team and share my love of glass with the community.

As the Assistant Beach Director in my hometown, I supervised a group of 10 lifeguards. Throughout the summer, I designed in-service trainings and implemented a detailed schedule that ensured adequate coverage during peak use hours. Additionally, because the beach was situated in a busy park, I often responded to questions by visitors about the local community, provided tips on restaurants, and gave directions to local sites to see.

In my role as a student staff member at Career and Employment Services (CES), I am often the first point of contact with the office for many of our constituents. As such, I develop and maintain knowledge of CES services and resources, making appropriate referrals when necessary.

My customer service experience, attention to detail, and successful history training and motivating a team coupled with the writing and speaking skills developed in my Communication Studies degree provide a strong foundation for the work I would do as the Visitor Services Assistant Manager. I look forward to speaking with you about my qualifications. If you would like to arrange an interview, please contact me at 253.555.5555 or awyatt@pugetsound.edu. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Ariel Wyatt

If you don't have a name, address the letter to a role.

Common titles:

- Hiring Manager
- Recruiter
- Internship Coordinator

Information included in the body of the cover letter should refer to the skills and competencies listed in the job description.

**Applying via email?** You can choose to place the cover letter in the body of the email or attach it as a separate document. Whichever you choose, you'll want to use a clear subject line that includes the name of the position (or requisition #) and your name.

Proofread every document you send to an employer. Small errors can undermine your credibility and show you don't pay attention to details.

A CES advisor can help you craft an effective letter and fine tune it before you submit to an employer.

|  |        |                               |
|--|--------|-------------------------------|
| Send   | To...  | jobs@applephysicaltherapy.com |
|  | Cc...  |                               |
|  | Bcc... |                               |
| Subject: Application for Physical Therapy Assistant Position from John Weyerhaeuser  |        |                               |
| Dear Hiring Manager:   |        |                               |
| <p>I'm writing to apply for the physical therapy assistant position I found on your website this week. My background is in athletics, having played and coached soccer teams for a number of years, and I will be earning a degree in exercise science this May from the University of Puget Sound. The combination of my academic interests, knowledge of sports and sports injuries, and experience working for a large athletic facility has prepared me well for the physical therapy assistant position.</p>  |        |                               |
| <p>Competitive sports have been a part of my life since I was five years old. In high school and college I competed in varsity level soccer and this year I was selected by my coach to serve as captain. The role has been challenging but really strengthened my organizational skills coordinating all the logistics of getting our team through a full season of matches on the road. In my coaching role I have developed my leadership and communication skills while working with a ranked youth soccer league in Tacoma.</p>   |        |                               |
| <p>As part of my exercise science degree, I did two internships that piqued my interest in physical therapy as a career and allowed me to apply what I've learned in the classroom. I especially enjoyed working with the young athletes at Starfire Sports in Seattle and educating them about avoiding injuries while building strength and endurance. While supporting their staff physical therapist and an exercise technician, I learned all the tasks you outlined in your job description, and discovered I have a knack for connecting with clients and making them feel comfortable.</p> |        |                               |
| <p>I'm drawn to Apple Physical therapy because of your focus on working with athletes and sports injuries. My background as an athlete and a coach adds to my knowledge base that will help me provide your staff and clients with the highest quality support. I would welcome the opportunity to talk with you about my qualifications for the position. Please contact me at (253) 555-5555 at your earliest convenience. Thank you for your time.</p>  |        |                               |
| Sincerely,   |        |                               |
| John Weyerhaeuser  |        |                               |

## Thank You Notes

Follow up an interview with a thank you note within 24 hours to make a positive impression on your interviewer and to reiterate your interest in the position. The note is brief, thanks the interviewer for their time, and refers to some aspect of the conversation. Be genuine and demonstrate enthusiasm for the organization. If you interviewed with multiple people at an organization, make an effort to send a thank you to each person.

### Which Format is Best?

Thank-you letters can be handwritten, hard copy typed, or sent via email. How do you decide which to send? Consider the organization and general feel you received about the culture—a more formal organization might prefer a typed letter, while a close-knit team at a PR firm might prefer a handwritten note. Speed is also an important factor. If you know the recipient is out of the office frequently email might be the best format. Here are some of the benefits and limitations of each format:

| Format                 | Benefits   | Limitations   |
|------------------------|--|---|
| <b>Handwritten</b>     | Handwritten notes are personalized and provide an opportunity to leave an impression by demonstrating your style. They're also, by necessity, usually brief and to the point. Since so much communication happens via e-mail, a handwritten note stands out. | Poor penmanship can impact readability and sending the letter by mail can take a few days to arrive.  |
| <b>Hard copy typed</b> | A formal business style provides more room to address specific topics from the conversation and can make a very polished, professional impression that may be the right note in more traditional fields.   | Sending by mail can take longer, plus the length and formality of the letter is similar to that of a cover letter, which can take longer to write. Depending on the industry, this approach may seem overly formal.           |
| <b>Email</b>           | Email is immediate, perfect for times when a decision will be made quickly or when you know the recipient will not be in a position to receive a letter through the postal service.  | The immediacy of e-mail is also the downfall as mistakes can slip through without thorough proofreading. An emailed thank you runs the risk of going unnoticed in an overloaded inbox or getting caught in junk mail filters. |

### Tips for Writing Handwritten Thank You Cards

Choose something tasteful that reflects your personal style. A simple notecard, i.e. not a greeting card size, that is blank inside is best. The cards don't even have to say "Thank You" on the front.

If you're worried about your penmanship, try writing out what you want to say on scratch paper and then take your time copying the words on the notecard.

Purchase the cards in advance of an interview and write them as soon as possible after the meeting, when the experience is fresh.

*May 27, 2012*

*Dear Ms. Jackson,*

*I enjoyed meeting with you and your team today about the Account Executive position at Creature Advertising. Thank you for taking the time to explain the parameters of the job in more depth. After learning more about the role I am especially excited about the possibility of joining your team. As we discussed, I am eager to contribute my technical background to your digital clients and I admire the speed with which you are delving into a new market. Thank you for considering me for the position. I hope to hear from you soon.*

*Best regards,*

*Sarah Kilworth*