



Resumes and Cover Letters

Get Organized

When it comes to organizing something like a job search, the process involves gathering the materials you will need and then breaking it down into small manageable steps. Steps you can do while continuing to live your regular life.

The person who gets organized is best prepared to run an effective job search because they:

- Set specific goals based on their current situation and their long-term interests
- Make plans for the search; an absolute necessity in landing a job
- Prepare accurate resumes and cover letters that are tailored to each situation
- Keep careful records of the people who can help
- Can always locate the information (brochures, notes, reports, papers) about a company or a person needed for the search
- Stay on top of the search by following up regularly with active leads.

Supplies needed:

- Job-Search Schedule
- flash drive
- 3-ring loose-leaf notebook
- File box or file cabinet

___ File folders

___ Message board

Resume Formats:

With so many different employment experiences possible, there is no single resume template that works for everyone. There are; however, generally accepted ways to arrange the information on your resume to present it in the best light.

The two styles that are discussed most often are the Chronological format and the Functional format. Both have their own advantages and disadvantages when it comes to presenting your information. A third style, the Combination, is a compromise between the two and has become more popular in recent years.

Chronological Format

This is the most common resume style, and the one that employers prefer. In the Chronological format, the emphasis is placed on employment experience. The applicant's job history is presented in reverse chronological order, with the most recent jobs placed at the top of the list.

The Chronological resume is good if your recent job experience is relevant to the job you are applying for, and you want to stay on a similar career path. Potential employers can easily see what you have done, and how you have progressed and gotten experience. Your education is more important and should be placed before your job history. This is true if your education is current and reflects skills needed by a potential employer.

Despite its popularity, there are some reasons why the Chronological format may not be right for you. If you are just entering the workforce from school, a resume like this may actually highlight your lack of experience. You may have held jobs recently that have no relevance to the position you're applying for. If you are re-entering the workforce after a substantial absence, this resume will highlight your recent inactivity. Any large gaps in your recent employment history will be evident, and you may be asked about them.

Likewise, a job history full of briefly held jobs might lead a potential employer to question your ability to remain employed. A long employment history at a single company will reveal your age to some extent, something you may not feel comfortable doing. However some employers look for more mature workers to fill their positions.

Furthermore, companies are not as loyal to their employees as in the past and likewise, employees are not loyal to companies. With this in mind, many individuals may have changed jobs several times in 2 to 3 years. With many temporary agencies being used, this can also show flexibility. Working temporary jobs should not be viewed as a bad thing. For example, this is a great way to get into a company and gain valuable experience, as well as getting to know the company. One should take advantage of this time period in that it can be viewed as an interviewing process.

Chronological Resume Format

Name
Address
City, State Zip
Telephone number
Email address

Objective State the objective for what you are applying.

Work Experience Begin with most recent first. List dates, job title, name of organization, and description of duties. Include action verbs that are transferable to the work you are seeking.

Education List most recent first. State the name of the university attended, degree received, major field of study, minor, certificate awarded.

Memberships/ Give name of the organization or activity and any position
or
Activities office you held.

Sample Chronological Resume

Evelyn Fischer
210 Lakeview Drive
Edina, Minnesota 55444
952-555-4545
efischer@yahoo.com

Summary

Professional with over 10 years of work experience as a Research Assistant with knowledge in lab procedures. Responsibilities have included establishing lab procedures and training new staff.

Work Experience

Research Assistant, Walnut Creek Mining, Inc.

Walnut Creek, CA, June 1996 – present

Located numerous abandoned gold mines

Updated and confirmed shaft locations and processing sites

Interpreted local geology, mineralogy, and structure

Worked extensively with gold-processing techniques

Buyer and Seller, New River Lapidary

Sacramento, CA, August 1990-May 1996

Consistently maintained sales of fine mineral specimens

Planned and performed buying and selling abroad

Organized and controlled entire stock of specimens

Fully responsible for maintaining all accounts

Lab Technician, Smithtown Laboratories

Sacramento, CA, August 1985-May 1996

Researched and analyzed environmental specimens

Established lab testing procedures and compiled training manual

Accurately performed routine lab testing on samples

Education

Bachelor of Science, Geological Sciences, March 1985

California State University, Northridge, CA

Associate of Science, Chemistry, June 1983

Memberships/ Geology Club

Functional Format

In this non-linear format, your skills and achievements are emphasized. Your employment history is summarized or avoided all together. Your skills and previous relevant experience (including educational experience) are presented at the beginning of your resume. They are organized so the employer can see how your skills relate to the job position you are applying for. (In a Chronological resume, employers may simply be looking at the jobs you have held previously to see if you have the experience they are looking for.) It may take more effort to write a Functional resume, but you are free to highlight your talents instead of your recent job experience.

The Functional resume can be particularly effective if you've held a number of similar positions; it will allow you to highlight your skills rather than itemize what might be a redundant looking job history.

But the Functional resume may also raise concerns in some employers' minds as to whether you are withholding information. This doesn't mean that functional resumes are ignored or that they can't be effective. But an employer looking for a clear job history may be put off by the Functional format, especially if you've used a Functional resume to hide your inexperience or a long gap in your employment history.

If Education is the most current relevant information then it needs to be listed above Employment Experience.

If you don't have any problems with the reverse Chronological format, use it instead. If you still like the idea of the Functional format, you may want to make it more acceptable by combining it with the Chronological format and creating a Combination resume.

Functional Resume Format

Name
Address
City, State Zip Code
Telephone number
Email address

Objective State briefly your overall objective and/or job titled desired.

Summary of Qualifications State briefly your achievements, the range of your experience, and the environments in which you have worked.

Relevant Skills List any specific skills and abilities that are relevant to the job for which you are applying. Group together by related areas.

Employment List job title, employer, location, dates of employment

Education List most recent first. State name of educational institution attended, degree received, major field of study, minor, or certificate awarded.

Sample Functional Resume

Margo Keller
3915 Derby Street
Berkeley, California 94705
(415) 390-6554
margok@hotmail.com

Objective: Public Information Specialist

Summary of Qualifications

- Proven ability to research, identify, and document valuable resources
- Skilled and creative writer, experience in developing training materials
- Able to initiate, organize and successfully follow through on projects

Relevant Skills & Experience

Networking & Resources

- Assembled library of materials and reports on cooperative living/working projects nation wide; used this to advise callers on how to make connections and find data
- Developed an improved filing system for extensive archives of design materials for LaRock Engineering

Advising & Teaching

- Advised hundreds of callers on how to conduct effective housing research and handle related issues, as primary local resource person in collective living field
- Taught classes in Beginning Typing and Office Practice. Designed and taught a six-session workshop, "Field Visits Bay Area Collective Homes."

Editing & Writing

- Initiated and produced 12-20 page monthly newsletter for 24 consecutive issues
- Edited 100-page book on women's self-led career groups, collaborating with author

Employment History

1988-present **Self-employed**, typing/editing service, Keller Business Service, Berkeley, CA

1985-1988 **Technical Writer**, LaRock Engineers, San Francisco, CA

1984-1985 **Travel and independent study**

Education: State University of New York at Albany, 1977-78, Sociology

Resume Writing Tips

Keep it concise

Employers have lots to do, so don't make the mistake of asking them to read through an unnecessarily long resume. A long, wordy resume will put off someone who is already short on time. **Resumes should be one page, if possible, and two if absolutely necessary to describe relevant work experience.** A two-page resume is no advantage if it's full of information that isn't reasonably applicable to the position you're applying for. Use the space only if you need it to fully disclose your accomplishments. According to RESOURCE's Business Partner Council most employers only want up to 10 years of previous experience unless it's relevant to the position then include additional years past that.

Make your words count

Your use of language is extremely important; you need to sell yourself to an employer quickly and efficiently. Address your potential employer's needs with a clearly written, compelling resume.

- Avoid large paragraphs (over six or seven lines). Resumes are often scanned by hiring managers. If you provide small, digestible pieces of information you stand a better chance of having your resume actually read.
- Use action verbs such as "developed," "managed," and "designed" to emphasize your accomplishments. Action words. When describing your prior job experience and duties, use active language. Instead of starting your sentence with a noun, start with an active, descriptive, impressive verb.

For example: "Customer Service Representative. Assisted customers with product selection, trained and supervised 15 new employees, organized special promotional events."

- Don't think of this as a term paper — use action verbs

- Don't use declarative sentences like "I developed the..." or "I assisted in..."; leave out the "I." **Use: Developed, Organized, and Trained, for example. See Action Word list**
- Numbers. Always include numbers, percentages, and dollar amounts in your job descriptions to back up your achievements. How many people did you supervise? How much money did you raise? How many wild bears did you feed during your stint at the zoo? How much did party favor sales increase under your direction? This approach immediately highlights the kind of impact you've made. Only use the numbers if they are significant to the job. By saying, "Supervised 2 staff members", may not be worth mentioning.
- Avoid passive constructions, such as "was responsible for managing." It's not only more efficient to say "**Managed**," it's stronger and more active.
- Length. **Keep it to one page.** You should tailor your resume to match the job description, so be sure to make changes accordingly.

Make the most of your experience

Potential employers need to know what you have accomplished to have an idea of what you can do for them.

- Don't be vague. Describe things that can be measured objectively. Telling someone that you "improved warehouse efficiency" doesn't say much. Telling them that you "cut requisition costs by 20%, saving the company \$3800 for the fiscal year" does. Employers will feel more comfortable hiring you if they can verify your accomplishments.
- Be honest. There is a difference between making the most of your experience and exaggerating or falsifying it. **A falsified resume can be easily spotted by an employer** (if not immediately then during the interview process), and if it doesn't prevent you from getting the job, it can cost you the job later on.

Don't neglect appearance

Your resume is the first impression you'll make on a potential employer, and a successful resume depends on more than what you say; how you say it counts as well.

- **Check your resume for proper grammar and correct spelling-evidence of good communication skills and attention to detail. Nothing can ruin your chances of getting a job faster than submitting a resume filled with (easily preventable) mistakes.**
- **Make your resume easy on the eyes.**
 1. Use normal margins (1" on the top and bottom, 1.25" on the sides)
 2. Do not cram your text onto the page
 3. Allow for some breathing room between the different sections.
 4. Avoid unusual or exotic font styles
 5. Use simple fonts with a professional look, whether you e-mail, fax, or mail your resume to prospective employers,
 6. Keep font plain and easy to read.
- **Formatting.** Just because you have Microsoft Word and all of its formatting capabilities, your resume doesn't have to look like a Caribbean vacation brochure. Myriad fonts, colors, and graphic embellishments do not help, so use minimal and purposeful formatting. Simple bullets will best separate your duties and skills; use bolding and italics sparingly. Formatting should highlight your accomplishments, not draw attention away from them. Less, in this case, is definitely more.
- **Use standard, non-textured, fine-grained paper in white or ivory.** These are the easiest to read. Keep in mind that textured and dark colored paper may not copy well when the employer makes copies to pass around to other participants in the hiring process. Just like your socks - your cover letters, mailing envelopes, and resumes should all match. Though this statement is still true basic white paper is acceptable, fewer people use "resume" paper anymore and employers don't typically expect it. Nowadays many employers prefer resumes be sent electronically.
- **If you need to copy your resume, make sure your copies are clean and clear.** Even the best looking resume can be ruined by a poor copier. Use only copiers maintained for professional copying.

Target – Target – Target

Emphasize what you can do for an employer. Be specific. **If you are going after more than one job opening, customize your resume accordingly.** It helps to tailor your resume for a specific position. Remember to only include the experience that is relevant to the job.

Eliminate superfluous details

Un-necessary details can take up a lot of valuable space on your resume.

- **Do not mention personal characteristics such as age, height, and marital status.** This is information that employers may not legally solicit from you, and they would probably be more comfortable if you don't volunteer it yourself.
- **List your hobbies and interests only if you can relate them to the position you're applying for.** If you need room to describe your work experience, avoid this altogether.
- In some resumes books, it is said to leave off the phrase, "References Available Upon Request"; however, some suggest that you include it, for it signifies the end of your resume. Most employers assume you have references they may contact, and will request them if there's a need to do so, usually at the job interview.
- **"Objective" and "Summary" statements--your objective should be clearly articulated in your cover letter – use a summary on your resume.** Be specific. Vague statements, such as "Looking to utilize my marketing skills" or "seeking a rewarding position" add little and may in fact make you appear insincere. This should be reviewed and written to fit each particular position (or something along these lines). Most employers say an objective on your resume is unnecessary since they already know you want the job or saw it in your cover letter. The summary should be a brief version of your elevator speech, something to grab the attention of the reader and say something about the "person behind the paper".

Resume Errors

After determining that a resume contains the minimum requirements for the job, checking for problems is the logical next step. These can be interpreted in one of two ways. The red flags often serve as a "screen-out" tool: Certain details about a candidate's background simply do not show the proven track record that you are looking for. Conversely, they can be seen as a "screen-in" tool. When a candidate

meets the major requirements for the position, any red flags on their resume serve as points for further exploration.

Below are some of the most commonly cited resume red flags, followed by a brief explanation of how to use these red flags in assessing a candidate's background:

1. Obvious Content Errors

Errors in spelling, punctuation, and grammar are often considered proof of poor written communication skills, or a lack of attention to detail. Even if the position does not directly require strength in these areas, questions are raised about a candidate's overall standards. After all, recruiters assume that candidates are putting their best foot forward when sending their resumes.

2. Short Tenures

The word "job hopper" comes to mind. But are short tenures necessarily a negative? Not always. More often than not, a candidate will explain short stays at each company with reasons that appear valid. It is possible that the candidate was a victim of layoffs, company closures, or cutbacks. Perhaps they have a family member whose job requires constant relocation. Good resume reviewers think beyond the job moves and wonder how candidates arrived at their decisions.

3. Employment Gaps

Are they hiding something? Did they take *that* long to find another job? If so, is something *wrong* with them? The truth is, employment gaps are not uncommon. Although spotting employment gaps may prompt companies to raise a red flag immediately, they usually just want to know more about the candidate's thought process. Maybe the candidate quit their last job to start a small side business that failed. Or maybe they simply wanted to take a long-deserved break. Whatever the reason, there's always a decision-making process involved that may provide useful information. **RESOURCE will work with you to help fill in the gaps in your employment history.**

4. Incorrect Degree/Certification Data

Someone "MCSE-certified" should not claim to be "MCES-certified." An extreme explanation for this red flag is that the candidate has provided false information. On the other hand, there's a good possibility that this is simply a typographical error. Either way, these errors make one wonder whether a candidate is honest or detail-oriented enough for the job.

5. Lack of Credible References

Use credible references. Someone that you trust will give you a good reference.

Resume Writing Excellence

These three simple procedures will push your resume across the line from mediocrity into excellence.

1. Analyze Your Skills

First and foremost, distinguish yourself by examining what you have to offer. Do some soul searching and think about how your background relates to the skills, competencies, and qualifications that your target employers most want.

Think about the self-analysis step in this way. As a student and a worker you have had countless opportunities to solve problems, utilize your favorite skills, and achieve results. Now is the time to recall and recount these experiences.

Look at each job and/or school experience and prepare a list of your accomplishments. Accomplishments, by definition, are experiences that describe a situation that required your special attention. Begin each edited statement with a verb that reveals the specific skill that you want to emphasize.

Consider these examples:

- "Launched and led a nationally-recognized corporate volunteer program, resulting in 17,000 employees contributing 95,000 hours of service on 900 projects in 21 sites throughout the United States."
- "Organized and managed newly created school programs, including a school vacation camp and a parents' night out program. Both programs generated new revenue that was used to strengthen student resources."
- "Launched a product marketing campaign that resulted in \$3 billion in sales over an 11-month period."

2. Showcase Your (Relevant) Accomplishments

Most employers prefer the chronological resume, because it emphasizes career progression and dates of employment. The functional resume emphasizes accomplishments and eliminates the details behind the job history. This may seem like the best option for most jobseekers--until they find out that employers are likely to disregard functional resumes. Why? Because companies always need to know your employment history facts.

The resume could be structured in a typical chronological fashion, emphasizing real accomplishments at every past job. Or you could highlight the accomplishments that apply to your job target and include these at the beginning

of the resume. Then balance the rest of your document with a chronological work history, including dates and job titles. In short, you should develop a personalized, comfortable format.

3. Create a Professional Visual Impression

Having settled content and style issues, you should now pay attention to the visual impact of the resume, especially if you are sending hard copies in the mail. Graphic designers and professional resume writers advise you to settle on one font style. When using boldface type, be consistent and conservative. If you are not, the reader's eye will jump around, and the purpose of emphasizing one piece of information over others will be lost. Many experts recommend using boldface type for job titles and leaving the names of employers in plain type. Use upper case, or capitalization, in a consistent manner, always capitalizing your name and job titles.

The Truth About Resumes

As always, it's a way in the door. But a decent resume guarantees nothing. New economy, old economy, it really doesn't matter. "Everything involved in your position search that represents you must be part of your marketing campaign," This will include you as a person and your wardrobe, grooming, and self-confidence. And the tools that you use: resume, letters, portfolio, references, business card, e-mail..."

Electronic Resumes

An electronic resume is simply your resume in a format that can be sent over e-mail or the Internet. The advantage to having an electronic resume is simple--you can respond via e-mail or the Web to job openings posted all over the world. No faxing or mailing necessary.

When sending an electronic resume, remember to:

- Include a cover letter and be sure to note where you found the ad.
- Send the resume and cover letter in one file. You can do this by writing or pasting your cover letter in the space before your resume. You can also send your cover letter as an e-mail message with your electronic resume as a file attachment.
- Use the job title and/or job reference number as the subject of your message. Cite any relevant job numbers noted in the ad.
- Follow up with an e-mail or phone call a week or so after you submit it.

To help employers find you, try to think like they do, think like a computer. Here are some tips from industry experts, recruiters, and employers on how to make your e-resume more searchable.

1. **Use the top half of page 1 for the most important information.**
Employers search for their most important criteria first – the same way they write job listings. Plus, many search engines pull hits based on the top half of page 1. So put your contact info, keywords, objective, achievements and your 10 most recent years of experience first.
2. **Use page 2 for non-critical information.** List other jobs, education (if education is the most relevant information then this should be on page 1), affiliations, or particulars like Spanish, Veteran (this might be considered critical info, I encouraged Veterans to include this word in their Summary) Willing to Travel.
3. **Put a keyword list at the top.** Include hard and soft skills in this order: technical knowledge, key action words (implementation, development), and relevant personal qualities ("organizational skills" or "detail-minded"). Include daily-use software (MS Project, Word, etc.) and cliché skills like teamwork and time management--provided they're important to your job.
4. **State clear and specific objectives.** Yes: "To be a DBA working with Sybase on HR, payroll or customer systems." No: "To use my technical and communication skills in a growing high-tech firm."
5. **Consider every critical job skill that employers might want.** Consider this sample keyword list of critical skills and facts for an Oracle project manager: "Oracle. Project management for Oracle HR application. Team leader for 6-month implementation of Oracle Version 7.6. Development of Oracle Payroll application. Team builder. Organizational skills. Budget Management. Meets deadlines. \$80,000 salary." This list immediately makes 13 search combinations possible--all simple, specific, and unique: Oracle + project management, Oracle + development, Oracle + HR, Oracle + Team Leader, etc.
6. **Just saying "Oracle" doesn't work.** Direct hits are like sales leads: to be useful, they must be qualified. Be detailed; tell employers exactly what you did on your last job and how you pushed the limits with your accomplishments.

Two More Essential Rules

1. Be sure you meet all of the critical job requirements. Here's the acid test: If you can't be 100 percent productive in 30 days, you're probably not qualified. If the technology is new, for example,

highlight related skills instead of traditional ones. The typical requirements for a job may be anything but typical.

2. Treat your e-resume like a newspaper ad. Passive marketing doesn't work. Most employers still hire through traditional channels, so use a one-two punch: Send your resume and then follow up. It gets more attention and conveys more interest than a printout.

Cover Letters

Perhaps the only thing job-seekers dread more than writing a resume is writing the cover letter to go with it. True, a resume requires good, solid writing and attention to detail, but a cover letter is addressed to a particular person--whoever is in charge of hiring--and requires the job-seeker to answer the most important question on that person's mind: "Why is this applicant the best qualified candidate for the job?"

How well you write a cover letter may play a large part in how effective your resume will be. A good cover letter may get you an interview; a bad one may make your resume little more than an afterthought.

Cover Letter Content

The cover letter is the first piece of your work that a potential employer sees. It reflects your ability to communicate and get a job done. If it doesn't work, your resume will not be read and you may not get an interview or job offer. Make it count!

The cover letter is your chance to sell yourself to a potential employer as the best candidate for a specific position. As such, it's just as important as your resume. In fact, **you should never send out a resume without one.**

The most important thing to remember is that your cover letter serves a separate function from your resume and should *not* be used to repeat the details of your resume, such as work history, education, or personal objectives. The resume is about you, your experience and your skills. **The cover letter is about what you can do for the employer.**

An effective cover letter should accomplish three things:

1. **Introduce Yourself and Your Reason for Writing**

The first paragraph needs to grab the hiring manager's attention. Say

exactly why you have sent your resume: you are interested in the company and you want to fill a need they have. Demonstrate your interest by indicating any connections between the employer and yourself. Show that you work in the same field, that you share a common professional interest, or that you have been following the company or industry in the news.

If you were referred to the company by a mutual friend or associate, mention them; the hiring manager may feel more obligated to respond to your letter. (Don't profess to know more than you do, however. If you make inaccurate statements regarding the company or the industry, the hiring manager will see right through it.) When offering to fill the company's need, be specific as possible. Don't just mention the job position; describe what the company requires from that position.

2. Sell Yourself

In the second part of the letter state (briefly) the skills you bring to the table that will specifically meet the employer's needs. There is no need to go into great detail; your resume should take care of that.

Instead, use this section to highlight how you will use your talents and experience to benefit the company. Don't use it to indicate how you think you'll benefit from being employed--with a stack of resumes on the desk and positions to fill, the hiring manager isn't concerned with your personal fulfillment. Keep your use of the personal pronoun "I" to a minimum. Try to use it in this sense: "Here's how I can help you."

3. Make a Plan

Close the letter by indicating what you would like to happen next. Don't leave the ball in the employer's court; take action! Tell the potential employer where you can be reached, either by phone or by e-mail, but don't wait for a call. Indicate that if you don't hear from them within a few days, you will follow-up with a phone call to make sure your resume and cover letter have reached the intended recipient, and to arrange a face-to-face interview. Be assertive but polite. (Some job seekers may want to use a paragraph to explain anything that's not apparent from the resume, such as large gaps in the employment history.)

There is no one "official" format, but here are some basic rules to keep in mind when composing a cover letter:

- A five-line block on the top center of the page containing: your name; home street address; city, state, ZIP code; phone number; and your e-mail address.
- The date should be on your letter. (The date may be separated from the block by one line.)
- Another block, flush left, one space below the date and one space above the greeting. This block contains the addressee's full name, title, company name, and address, including city, state and ZIP code.
- Use a colon after the greeting, not a comma. The greeting should address a specific person in a formal manner. "Dear Ms. Harper:" is perfect; "Dear Jennifer:" is not.
- Use a personalized salutation (not, for example, "To Whom It May Concern"). **Make an effort to find out who will be receiving your letter. If necessary, telephone the company and ask.** If you do not find a specific name, address the letter to "Hiring Manager," "Human Resources Manager," or simply "Manager."
- Paragraphs should be separated by one blank line of space; indentation is not necessary.
- You may use bullets and bold print in the body of your cover letter to organize and highlight information, and make it easier to read. If you do decide to use them, do so conservatively.
- The closing should read "Sincerely," followed by your signature underneath, then your full name in print underneath that. Always leave enough room for your signature between the closing and your name when you print your cover letter.

Cover Letter Writing Tips

How you write your cover letter is as important as the message it delivers. Your letter is an example of how well you communicate, and no employer wants to hire people who can't do so effectively. With that in mind, here are some tips on making your cover letter look and sound professional.

- **Personalize the letter.** Whenever possible, address your cover to the individual responsible for filling the position. A generic salutation sends the message that you aren't familiar with the company; such an impression won't convince the reader that you're enthusiastic about the job. Likewise, "To whom it may concern" will probably concern no one. And "Dear Sir" or "Dear Madam" are ill advised--don't risk

alienating or offending your reader. Again, if necessary use "Hiring Manager," "Human Resources Manager," or simply "Manager."

Make a phone call, visit the library or use the Internet to find out the name and title of the person who does the hiring. Then make sure to get the spellings correct. Remember, the hiring manager will be looking for people who set themselves apart. Take the time to find out who's in charge and you may be that person.

- **Be natural.** Use simple, uncomplicated language and sentence structure. Don't try to sound like someone else, particularly if that means using unnaturally formal language, convoluted sentences and words you've never used before (perhaps misusing them in the process). You may mean to impress, but you'll often sound awkward. Be formal, but don't be a stiff. Say things in a simple, straightforward way, and don't rely on a thesaurus. As with your resume, use action words to create dynamic sentences.
- **Be specific and get to the point.** Your cover letter must be intriguing enough to get the reader to look at the resume, but should be only an introduction to the resume, not a repeat of it. Make sure you answer the question, "Why should I hire this person?"
- **Avoid using clichés,** like "I've taken the liberty of enclosing my resume," or "I'm a people person." It's difficult to sell yourself as unique if your letter reads like every other one in the pile.
- **Be positive.** Don't complain about your boss or describe your present or previous work experience as "boring." Nobody wants to hire somebody with an attitude. Above all, don't sound like you're begging for a job. A hiring manager may wonder why you're so desperate.
- **Be confident, but not arrogant.** Don't be negative or too humble. Tell them you're qualified for the job, but don't demand it. Don't profess to know more about the company than you really do. Explain why you find the company attractive (there must be some reason or you shouldn't be writing) and leave it at that.
- **Be polite and professional.** You may be a comedian with your friends, but a potential employer should be treated with respect.
- **Be efficient.** Don't waste space (and the reader's time) on unnecessary details. Respect the employer's time--make sure every sentence has something to do with explaining your interest in the

company, illustrating how you'll fill the company's needs, and how you'll contact the company in the near future.

- **Type your letter**, but beware of the dangers of word processing. If you send a similar letter to several companies, make sure that you change all customized statements accordingly; no company wants to read how much you'd like to work for their competitor. Carefully read each letter before you sign it.
- **Be available.** Remember to tell the employer how to reach you. Give a phone number, which will be reliably answered by either a person or a voicemail. If possible, include an e-mail address.
- **Do not leave the ball in the employer's court.** Indicate what reaction you expect from your letter and how you will follow up. For example, don't end with "I look forward to hearing from you soon."
- **Proofread.** Check carefully for grammar and spelling mistakes, then check again. Typos and grammatical errors say a lot about the kind of work you do. Don't depend entirely on the spell-check function of your computer. If you use "there" for "their," for example, spell-check won't notice. Keep a dictionary handy for proper word usage.
- **Sign it.** If you forget this, the employer may feel like you've sent a form letter.
- **Package it nicely.** Print your resume and cover letter on the same paper stock; the uniformity will look professional. Use only printers that produce neat, readable text with no stray marks or smudges. If possible, avoid using a dot-matrix printer or a manual typewriter.
- **Keep one for yourself.** Make a copy of each letter sent, and keep it for future reference.

Sample Cover Letter

Your Name

Street Address
City, State Zip Code
Phone Number
Email Address

Current Date

Individual's Name
Job Title
Name of Organization
Street Address
City, State Zip Code

Dear Mr./Ms. _____ :

First Paragraph: State the reason for writing. Name the specific position or type of work for which you are applying. Mention how you learned of the opening.

Second Paragraph: Explain why you are interested in working for this employer and specify how you are PERFECT for this position. Do not only repeat the information on your resume. Include something special or unique about yourself that would "benefit" the employer. Remember, the reader will consider this an example of your writing skills.

Third Paragraph: Mention your resume is enclosed and indicate your desire to meet with the employer. You may want to suggest alternate dates and times, or simply advise them of your flexibility to the time and place. Include day and evening contact information. Include a statement or question that will encourage the reader to respond. Be sure to communicate your plan to follow up. You might state that you will be in the area on a certain date and would like to set up a meeting, or you will call on a certain date to set up a meeting. Never leave it up to the employer to get in touch with you. Finally, thank the employer for his/her time.

Sincerely,

(Your signature should be in blue or black ink)

Your typed name

Enclosure

RESOURCE Sample Cover Letter

Use the following sample Cover Letter

John Brown

5400 North Irving Street
Minneapolis, Minnesota 55444
612-752-8100
jbrown@yahoo.com

May 25th, 2003

Sherrie LeCrone
Training Services Manager
1900 Chicago Avenue South 2nd Fl.
Minneapolis, Minnesota 55404

Dear Ms. LeCrone:

I'm responding to the ad in the Star Tribune regarding the Compute Technician Position that you have available. I am A+ Certified and just graduated from Avivo Institute. I feel that I would be an asset to your organization and would like an interview with you to discuss my skills and qualifications.

Enclosed is a copy of my resume. As you can see, I have worked as an Intern at 3M Corporation in Saint Paul, MN. Some of my experience as a PC Technician is in upgrading, installation and networking of PC's and peripherals. I also 10 plus years in Customer Services and I have a degree in Business Management.

Again, I would love the opportunity to interview with you. I may be reached at 612-752.8100 or by email at jbrown@yahoo.com.

Sincerely,

John Brown