

Professional Letters

There are three types of letters used during the job search process: **cover/application letters** serve as an introduction to your resume, **letters of interest or inquiry** are inquiries about possible vacancies or a request for an informational interview, **thank you letters** are a follow-up to an interview. Many job seekers concentrate their efforts on developing a resume, but dedicate little time to writing effective letters. While a resume is important, a good cover letter entices the recipient to give your resume a thorough review by planting seeds of interest.

Letter of Interest/Inquiry

Letters of interest are sent to companies to investigate possible job vacancies and informational interview contacts. State your reason for the inquiry in your letter. How did you learn about the organization? What prompted you to send a letter? Did you receive a referral from someone who works at the organization?

- The central paragraphs will be much of the same as a cover/application letter. Provide examples of your qualifications to persuade the employer to consider you for a position.
- It is important to follow up these letters with a phone call, since you may never receive a response if no open positions exist. In your letter, mention the time frame in which you will be contacting the person. Then make sure you follow-up as promised. Allow 5-10 business days before you contact them.

Cover/Application Letters

This type of letter is used to apply for specific openings and accompanies your resume. It gives you an opportunity to introduce yourself to the company and provides a link between the job, your skills, and experience. Remember that your cover letter, like your resume, plays a vital role in forming that important first impression.

- The cover/application letter should inform the hiring official why he or she is receiving the resume (referral, saw job posting). If you have already spoken to them by phone or in person, note this in your letter (preferably in the first paragraph!) Hiring officials talk to many applicants each day, do not assume they will remember you.
- Provide detailed information about your qualifications without repeating your resume verbatim. Instead, state the value of your experiences, education, or personal qualities. Ask yourself, “What have I learned from these experiences?” Then relate this to the skills you can provide to the employer for that specific open position. **Emphasize what you can do for the employer**, not how you will personally benefit from being hired for the job.
- When applying for a specific position, your letter should reflect the qualifications listed in the actual job posting. The closer the match between the employer’s requirements and your background, the more likely you will be contacted for an interview.

Thank You Notes & Letters

A thank you letter sent following an interview or informational interview is not only good manners, it is **essential**. Letters serve as a reminder, and can also be considered **marketing tools**. A thank-you letter is a perfect opportunity to expand upon related skills/experiences that you may have forgotten to highlight during the interview, and leaves the company with a favorable impression. If the company is having difficulty deciding between you and another candidate, a well-written thank you letter could play an important role in the decision to hire you.

- Make sure it is sent within 48 hours of your interview and keep it to two or three short paragraphs.
- A short statement about your qualifications and continued interest in the position should be added.
- In case of a panel interview, be sure to get the correct spelling of the individual(s) who conducted the interview and send a personalized thank-you letter to each of them.
- It is okay to send a handwritten thank-you note as long as it is on professional card stock.
- Submit a typed letter on resume paper if you have handwriting that is difficult to read or if that is your preference.

Basic Cover/Application Letter Principles

Layout/Appearance

- Always type your letters using a professional-looking font that is consistent with your resume.
- Match the heading of your resume and the heading of your letter for a professional look.
- Adhere to block style format for business correspondence (double-space between paragraphs; text flush to the left).
- Use the contact's honorific title such as Mr., Ms., or Dr. (always use Ms. instead of Miss or Mrs.).
- Typos, misspellings and grammatical errors can leave a negative impression with employers and cause your application to be rejected. Have at least two other people proofread to make sure your letter is error-free. Ask someone that works in your field to critique and proofread your application materials for content and the Writing Center on-campus for typos and grammar.
- Sign your letter at the bottom of the page in blue or black ink.
- Print your letter on quality paper that matches your resume.
- Letters should be concise and simple, yet still fully discuss your qualifications. Keep your letter to one page.

Writing Style

- Avoid beginning all your sentences with the word "I". Place a greater emphasis on the word "you" when possible.
- Avoid the phrase "I am writing" in your opening paragraph, as this is understood in a letter.
- Lengthy paragraphs are overwhelming to read. Divide your text into several paragraphs when necessary to keep paragraphs short.
- Use transition phrases and topic sentences to improve the flow of the letter between paragraphs.
- Eliminate statements of doubt. Your letter should always convey confidence and a positive attitude. Avoid any statements or words that sound like you are unsure of your abilities or the contributions you have and can make. For instance, statements like, "If you think I am qualified", or "I hope you find my..." will not assure the reader that you are a confident individual.
- Provide specific examples to illustrate how your qualifications meet the needs of the company.

Overall Impression/Marketing Effectiveness of Content

- Address your letter to a specific person, and double check the spelling of the individual's name. If the job posting did not indicate a name, you may need to call the company to obtain this information.
- Tailor all your materials to the position and company, emphasizing how your specific qualifications match the employer's needs.
- Double check to make sure all of the items cited in your cover letter also appear on your resume.
- Use factual statements regarding an organization rather than flattery to gain attention of the employer.
- The tone of your letter should be professional, yet demonstrates your enthusiasm for the job and the company.
- Written in a style that conveys self-confidence in your abilities without being overly aggressive.
- Do not oversell yourself or appear too desperate. Phrases such as "I will work for free if you give me the chance," or "I will take any job you have available" are not effective.
- Follow through on any action stated in your letter, such as a phone call to the employer. Maintain a contact log to aid you with following-up in a timely fashion.
- Carefully read through the company's instructions for submitting your application materials. If you are unsure how to send your materials, note in your email that you have sent them in multiple formats for them to open as they prefer. Microsoft Word is preferred, but .pdf and text embedded in the email are acceptable alternatives.

Professional Email Etiquette

Professional email is very different from casual email or instant messenger. As email becomes increasingly popular in the job application process, you need to take time to think through the content of your email and the message you might be sending to employers. Remember: it is easier to be ruled out than ruled in for a position. Here are some rules to consider when writing an email in which you are job prospecting or applying:

Mind Your Manners: Think of the basic rules you learned growing up, like saying please and thank you. Address people you do not know as Mr., Ms., or Dr., only address someone by first name if they imply it is okay to do so.

- Always introduce yourself the same way you would in a cover letter.

Dear Mr./Ms. So and So:

Please accept this letter as an application for the XYZ position at ABC Company.

- In the subject line, make it obvious why you are writing: "Application for XYZ position."
- Make sure you change the contact name and content according to the person/company to whom you are sending the message.
- If you are responding to an email, include the original message in the reply, so the receiver can put your email into the correct context.
- Respond within two business days.
- Name your document "your name, resume." Employers receive hundreds of resumes via email. If you follow-up by asking recruiters if they received your email, they will not have to look through 300 attachments called "resume."
- If you are attaching your resume, ask the receiver if they would prefer that you send it in a different format, ie: Microsoft Word, Rich Text Format, or as a .PDF.

Watch Your Tone: It is very difficult to express tone in writing. You want to come across as respectful, friendly, and approachable. You do not want to sound curt or demanding.

- Never use all capital letters. Employers may think that you are screaming, it can also be difficult to read.
- Do not assume that if an employer is informal that you should be.

Be Concise: Get to the point of your email as quickly as possible, but do not leave out important details that will help your recipient answer your query.

Be Professional: This means, stay away from abbreviations and do not use emoticons (smiley faces). Also, make sure the email address you use for business communication is professional. Remember, your UWRF email account expires three months after you graduate.

- Think about the message your email address sends. Keep your address simple, and avoid unprofessional sounding names like "studmuffin" or "partygirl."
- Do not use slang.

Use Correct Spelling and Proper Grammar: Do not just use spell check, as it will not catch words that are spelled correctly but are misused within the context of the sentence. Have someone else proofread your message before you send it. It may be easier to find errors if you print and review your e-mail.

Wait to Fill in the "TO" Email Address: This will keep you from accidentally sending an email prematurely. It is easy to accidentally click the send icon, when you really meant to click on the attachment icon.

Email Examples

Your email can be a brief introduction:

To: xyzperson@abccompany.org
From: cap@psued.edu
Subject: XYZ Job Application

Dear Ms. Clark,

This email is in response to the ad posted on the University of Wisconsin-River Falls Hire-a-Falcon vacancy list for a XYZ position at ABC company (Job Posting #123). Please accept the attached letter and resume as my application for this position. My skills and experience closely fit the posted job description, and I hope to hear from you soon.

Thank you,

Jane Student
(715) 425-5555
jane.student@yahoo.com

Or your email can be your cover letter:

To: xyzperson@abccompany.org
From: cap@psued.edu
Subject: XYZ Job Application

Dear Ms. Clark,

This email is in response to the ad posted on the University of Wisconsin-River Falls Hire-a-Falcon vacancy list for XYZ position at ABC company (Job #123). Please accept the attached resume as an application for this position. My educational background and two years of banking experience fit the posted job description, and I am excited to apply.

As a Business Administration student at the University of Wisconsin-River Falls, I have taken advantage of numerous internship opportunities to gain relevant banking and customer service experience. For the past two years I have worked as a Bank Teller at Wells Fargo, where I was responsible for serving customers, balancing my drawer and mentoring new tellers. In addition, I have served as the treasurer of the Business Association on campus for the past two years, studied abroad in Scotland, and completed a financial management internship this summer. These experiences helped enhance my leadership, teamwork, customer service and time-management skills, which can be useful at ABC company.

The opportunity to become a contributing member of ABC Company, and continuing the tradition of friendly and accurate service excites me. A meeting to learn more about your needs and how I can contribute would be greatly appreciated. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Joe Student
(715) 426-4444
Joe.student@gmail.com

David Baldwin

1345 Grand Avenue

St. Paul, MN 55105

(651) 555-1212

DBaldwin@yahoo.com

November 12, 2008

Ms. Victoria Anderson, Sales Director
Purina Mills
555 Maryville University Drive
Suite 500
St. Louis, MO 63141

Dear Ms. Anderson:

Through the Hire-a-Falcon job search database at the University of Wisconsin-River Falls, I learned about your organization. In May 2009, I will graduate with a Bachelor's degree in Agriculture and would be interested in an entry-level sales position with Purina Mills.

As an undergraduate student, my internships and coursework have supplied me with many skills and an understanding of animal nutrition, technology, and sales techniques. For example:

- Awarded to serve as the 2006 Pork Ambassador for the Minnesota Pork Producers Association. Represented the Minnesota Pork Producer's Association and spoke about the pork industry for different age groups and on various agricultural radio and television programs.
- Coordinated a booth, outreach, and marketing efforts for the Minnesota State Fair.
- Served as an Admissions Intern, which required me to visit area high schools and college fairs to recruit students, and provide campus tours to sell the institution to 200+ prospective students and families annually.

The opportunity to learn more about Purina Mills and potential job openings would be greatly appreciated. During spring break which is March 6-10, I will be in St. Louis, MO. I will call you next week to see if it would be possible to meet with you to discuss potential positions. In the meantime, if you have any questions or if I may provide additional information, I can be reached at DBaldwin@yahoo.com or at (651) 555-1212. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

David Baldwin (this should be an actual signature)

David Baldwin

Cameron Larson

Current: 1200 Sycamore Avenue ♦ River Falls, WI 54022 ♦ (715) 555-1234
Permanent: 198 Sylla Drive ♦ Eau Claire, WI 54701 ♦ (715) 555-4567 ♦ cameron.larson@gmail.edu

October 24, 2008

Mr. Scott Johnson
President
Casey Family Programs
1300 Dexter Avenue
Seattle, WA 98109-3542

Dear Mr. Johnson:

Please accept this cover letter and résumé for the position of Case Assistant at Casey Family Programs in the Seattle, WA location. Lucy Smith, a Child Welfare Worker in your office, informed me about this position. I am confident that my educational background and past experiences are directly related to the position responsibilities.

Your position requires skills and knowledge of child development and welfare. With my degree in Social Work from the University of Wisconsin-River Falls, I have worked as an Advocate at Turningpoint for the past three years. As an Advocate, I was responsible for managing the volunteer program that included training and supervising 60+ volunteers annually. Additionally, while assisting with the client intake process, I organized paperwork, answered questions, consoled clients, and directed clients to necessary community resources.

As a Peer Advisor, I have worked one-on-one with 100+ clients, which enhanced my interpersonal communication skills. During each appointment, I worked to establish rapport at the beginning by asking questions to learn more about their individual goals, career plans, and current situation. This laid a strong foundation of trust and ensured high quality customer service was provided. I also facilitated 13 career related workshops to my peer group, which increased my public speaking skills.

The opportunity to interview with your organization would be appreciated. Please feel free to contact me at cameron.larson@gmail.edu or at (715) 555-1234. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Cameron Larson

Cameron Larson

Introduction Paragraph

State why you are writing and the position for which you are applying. This is also a perfect time to network and mention if someone recommended you for the position. Also, state specific reasons why you've applied to this position and/or organization. Finally, utilize a thesis sentence to map out the remainder of your cover letter.

Middle Paragraph(s)

Your goal is to clarify why you should be hired for the position.

You might use one of the following approaches:

1. Illustrate the relationship between your skills and experience and the position for which you are applying.
2. Describe your strengths and accomplishments as they relate to the position.
3. Provide clear reasons for the employer to consider you for the position.
4. This is also the appropriate place to explain special circumstances, such as returning to teaching after a hiatus, or changing jobs.

Final Paragraph

End your letter by clarifying what will happen next and how they can most easily reach you.

SALLY BAUER

sbauer@aol.com

Current Address:

1009 Johnson Street
River Falls, WI 54022
(715) 425-2222

Permanent Address:

20401 13th Place
Cashton, WI 54619
(608) 555-4444

February 12, 2008

Mr. Robin Erb
Human Resources
Chicago Botanic Garden
1000 Lake Cook Road
Glencoe, IL 60022

Dear Mr. Erb:

Please consider this letter and enclosed resume as an application for the Horticulturist position available in the Japanese and Waterfall gardens. Ms. Olsen, a professor of Horticulture at the University of Wisconsin-River Falls, suggested that I apply for this position. With a Bachelor's degree in Horticulture and an internship at St. Croix Gardens, I am confident that I am a great fit for this position.

You will find me to be a key asset at the Chicago Botanical Garden due to my creativeness that complements my knowledge of plant care and excellent communication skills.

Your Requirements

- Maintain gardens
- Design displays
- Writing articles, leading tours, providing updates; good communication skills-written and verbal
- Computer literacy

My Qualifications

- Cared for ornamental plants as a Nursery Assistant Intern and also updated the beds to provide a more aesthetic look and feel
- Designed all components of landscaping and nursery lots to improve all plants' visibility
- Discussed maintenance with lot owners to ensure proper care of plants. Also, supervised 30 employees of diverse backgrounds and tutored multiple students on a variety of horticulture topics
- Familiar with Microsoft Word, Power Point, Excel, and Access as well as many Internet applications

The opportunity to discuss my qualifications and learn more about your needs would be welcomed. You may reach me at (715) 425-2222 or by email at sbauer@aol.com. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Sally Bauer

Sally Bauer

JENNIFER SCOTT

1200 Foxglove Way * Hudson, WI 54016

(715) 425-2222 * jscott@gmail.com

November 1, 2008

Mr. Mark Brandt
Human Resources
305 Madison Avenue
New York, NY 10185

Dear Mr. Brandt:

I had the pleasure of meeting you while you were at the University of Wisconsin – River Falls Career Fair a few weeks ago. Hearing about the Marketing Assistant position at Bilingual Resources has heightened my interest in working for the company. Please accept this letter of application and resume for your consideration.

From the company literature you provided, it was apparent that excellent communication skills are highly valued. This past summer I worked for 3M as a Marketing Intern for their Consumer and Office Products Division in Carolina, Puerto Rico. I conducted numerous calls to survey customers about their needs in order to help provide direction to 3M's marketing initiatives. Not only am I fluent in both English and Spanish, but my background in sales has strengthened my ability to work effectively with a wide variety of individuals. In addition, my communication skills were enhanced by my Business Writing and Business and Professional Communication courses. During both classes, I improved the quality of presentations by providing visual aids using Microsoft Power Point. I am also very efficient with creating Microsoft Access databases. While at 3M, I created a database that stored customer information which improved communication lines between clients and the employees.

It is evident that through my internship and education, I have developed the fundamental skills necessary to succeed in the Marketing Assistant position at Bilingual Resources. An opportunity to meet with you to learn more about Bilingual Resources' marketing needs would be greatly appreciated. You may reach me at jscott@gmail.com or at (715) 425-2222, if you have questions before then. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Scott

Jennifer Scott

Meredith Hendricks

123 20th Avenue • River Falls, WI • (715) 425-1111 • Meredith.Hendricks@yahoo.com

February 19, 2008

Ms. Barbara Jones, Publisher
On The Ball Magazine
11 South Third Street
Dallas, TX 11245

Dear Ms. Jones:

Please accept this letter and resume as an application for your Sports Writer position at *On The Ball Magazine*. I am a graduating senior at the University of Wisconsin-River Falls, majoring in Journalism with an emphasis in News/Editorial and a minor in Professional Writing. I am confident that I would make an excellent candidate for your Sports Writer position.

By working in multiple offices at the University of Wisconsin-River Falls, as well as taking many writing classes, I have had the opportunity to continually develop my written communication skills. As both the Marketing Intern and the Design Coordinator for campus offices, I wrote and designed articles, brochures, faculty newsletters, and press releases. Along with the ability to effectively write a story, the position also requires basic photography skills. I have extensive experience with both still and action photography. While taking numerous photography classes, I have had the opportunity to capture a variety of sporting events for classroom projects using up-to-date digital equipment.

My ability to write creatively, along with my photography skills and love for sports makes me an excellent candidate for this position. I look forward to meeting you in person to further discuss my qualifications. You may reach me at Meredith.Hendricks@yahoo.com or at (715) 425-1111. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Meredith Hendricks

Meredith Hendricks

Carl B. Levasser

8459 Archers Boulevard, Woodbury, MN 55129
715-859-6445
carblev@hotmail.com

March 17, 2008

Mr. Mark Grenko
Human Resources Manager
Kinze Manufacturing, Inc.
P.O. Box 806
Williamsburg, IA 52361

Dear Mr. Grenko:

Please accept this cover letter and resume for the Precision Agriculture Product Manager position. The education that I have received at the University of Wisconsin-River Falls (UWRF) as an Agricultural Engineering Technology major along with other supporting courses outside of my major, specifically Farm Management and Direct Marketing, makes me a well-rounded candidate for this position.

As a student at UWRF, I was able to understand and use the AgLeader PF Advantage system along with a variable rate controller from Rawson Control Systems as part of our Precision Agriculture Technology class. From this class, I also gained a strong understanding of GPS technology and how it is used within precision agriculture. The first-hand knowledge and experience I have of AgLeader products would give me a running start as the Precision Agriculture Product Manager when learning the Kinze Vision System, as well as other precision agriculture products.

My professional experiences have sharpened many skills that would be beneficial within this position. I am currently teaching classes within the Agricultural Engineering Technology Department at UWRF. Teaching has helped strengthen my communication skills and develop my analytical thinking through having to create curriculum and procedures for both lecture and lab sections of class. These experiences would be helpful when assisting Kinze employees in all departments, from Product Support to Engineering. When I worked as a Hall Manager at UWRF I often dealt with multiple tasks, including supervising nine Resident Assistants, advising the Hathorn Hall Executive Board, and being a full-time student. The leadership and interpersonal skills I cultivated as a Hall Manager would be essential to my involvement everyday as a Kinze employee. I could make an immediate contribution, whether working with and assisting other departments, training dealers, or promoting products at trade shows. The sales experience I gained working as the 1st Assistant Plumbing Manager at Menards, coupled with the Direct Marketing course I took at UWRF, gives me both the sales and marketing experience you are looking for too. These attributes among others would make me a great addition to the Kinze team.

The opportunity to share more of why I would be a valuable employee for Kinze would be appreciated. You may reach me at 715-859-6445 or by email at carblev@hotmail.com. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Carl B. Levasser

Carl B. Levasser

MELISSA PINES

Present ♦ 302 South Basil Street, Apt. 160 ♦ River Falls, WI 54022 ♦ (651)215-6120 ♦
Permanent ♦ 1122 477th Lane SW ♦ Ham Lake, MN 55304 ♦ melissa.pines@gmail.com ♦

April 20, 2008

Ms. Stacey Barth
CSM Corporate Office
500 Washington Avenue South
Suite 3000
Minneapolis, MN 55415

Dear Ms. Barth:

Please accept this letter and resume as an application for the position as a Marriott ExecuStay Account Coordinator Intern for CSM Corporation. I discovered this position while searching online at the University of St. Thomas's website under marketing internships. With my experience and skills, I would be a strong candidate for this position.

For this Marriott ExecuStay Account Coordinator Intern position you will discover that my abilities and experiences will greatly benefit your team. A good intern needs to have the ability to multi-task, possess excellent communication skills, and have outstanding organizational skills. While working as a marketing intern, I used my multi-tasking skills by completing tasks such as: designing print media posters, flyers and table tents, hanging and distributing posters and flyers, contacting sponsors, meeting with store owners, and picking up merchandise. As a peer advisor, the use of my writing skills, listening skills, and communication skills has assisted students and alumni in creating résumés, cover letters, and portfolios as well as conducting mock interviews. Through my experience, I have also utilized my public speaking skills by co-presenting career related topics to classes. I have also developed my writing skills by working on press releases, case studies, and group projects for my Sales Promotions and Event Planning class. Last year, while volunteering in India, I planned and led simple activities to entertain and educate toddlers, preschoolers, and some adults. This allowed me to use my organizational skills. From my past employment and volunteer experiences I have acquired a strong work ethic.

CSM Corporation would benefit by hiring me because not only am I qualified, but also because I enjoy using my multi-tasking skills and helping people. I am confident that I could fulfill the position as a Marriott ExecuStay Account Coordinator Intern and look forward to meeting you. If you have questions, comments or concerns please feel free to contact me at melissa.pines@gmail.com or (651) 215-6120. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Melissa Pines

Melissa Pines

Thank You Letter Example

KYLE HERZOG

◆ 654 Johnson Street ◆ River Falls, WI 54022 ◆ (715) 555-1212 ◆ kyle.herzog@gmail.com ◆

September 15, 2008

Mr. Kevin Smith
Marketing Director
Carmichael Lynch
110 North 5th Street
Minneapolis, MN 55403

Dear Mr. Smith:

Thank you very much for interviewing me yesterday for the Marketing Assistant position at Carmichael Lynch. I enjoyed meeting with you and learning more about the position and would like to reiterate my interest and enthusiasm.

I was very encouraged to learn that my qualifications matched so well with your requirements. The creative approach to marketing that you desire, confirmed my ability to excel in the position. My marketing promotion internship with Clear Channel Communications has given me the ability to put my creativity to work through the implementation of hallway poster advertisements, creating direct mail publications, and experimenting with additional methods of gaining consumer attention, which will be very beneficial when working with Carmichael Lynch.

One highlight I failed to mention during my interview was the three years of marketing experience I had with UW-River Falls as a Marketing Intern in Career Services. You may find samples of my work from this position at www.mywebspace.com/uwrfcareerintern.

I look forward to the opportunity to become a positive force within the Marketing Department. If you would like additional information please feel free to contact me at kyle.herzog@gmail.com or at (715) 555-1212.

Sincerely,

Kyle Herzog

Kyle Herzog

First Paragraph

It is important to personalize each thank you note to the specific individual. Express thanks and appreciation for the interview, and the consideration extended to you. State the job for which you were interviewed, as well as the date and location of the interview

Second Paragraph

- 1) Re-affirm your interest in the position and company.
- 2) Re-emphasize your strongest qualifications.
- 3) Re-address items/questions from the interview. If there was a question that caused confusion, it is appropriate to restate your answer.
- 4) Draw attention to the good match between your qualifications and the job requirements.

Third Paragraph

Show willingness to provide any additional clarifying data or statements and submit any further information you may want to add to your application.