

## 18: Job Application Materials

### Chapter Objectives

The purpose of this chapter is to:

- Apply research techniques for job searching in your field of study
- Design a resume for a job application
- Create a cover letter for a job application
- Describe the process of interviewing for jobs
- Apply networking skills by using various social media

### Introduction

The **job search process** can be very intimidating. Many people struggle to find listings they are interested in, while others may be intimidated or overwhelmed by the application process. The diagram below explains the steps that occur during a job search. Many people think it starts with finding a job post, applying with your application, cover letter and resume, and then going into the interview. However, there are many more steps involved in order to be successful in your job search.

Job seeking is a multi-step process, which should be completed in order to increase your likelihood of obtaining the desired position. Often, it looks like the following:

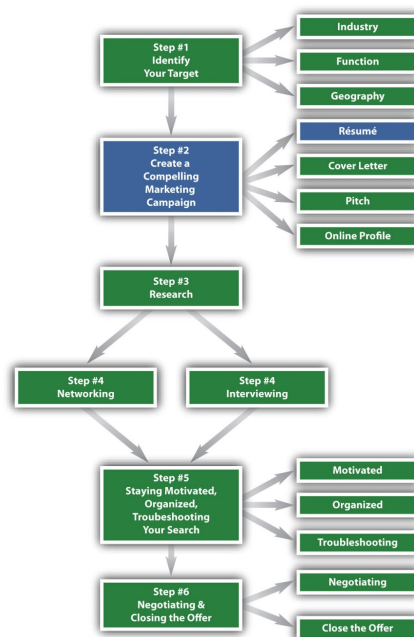


Figure 1: The Six-Step Job Search Process—Step 2. (CC BY 2017; Amber Kinonen)

### Job Research

The first step is to figure out what type of job you are looking for. Are you just coming out of college and looking for an entry-level position? Are you an experienced technician in your field and you are looking for another job? Once you have determined what type of job you are looking for, you need to do some research on positions available in your field. There are many places you can look to find a job in your field of study. There are **job search websites** like Monster, Indeed, LinkedIn, etc... You can also look at company websites in their "career opportunities" section. It is also good to tell friends, family, and colleagues that you are looking for a job. They might know of opportunities that are available at their employer.

Once you find the jobs you want to apply for, you will need to decipher the **job description**.

## Deciphering the Job Description

Most job descriptions can be found on the employer's website. Generally, a job description will contain important information about what the job entails, along with any technical or educational requirements the employer expects qualified applicants to hold. To start planning your application materials, identify each skill and qualification listed on the job posting. You can highlight on a physical printout of the posting, or copy down details into a notebook or on a spreadsheet.

- List each skill and qualification on a separate line.
- Group like with like. If communication skills are listed as important, in addition to giving presentations to potential clients, list one after the other.

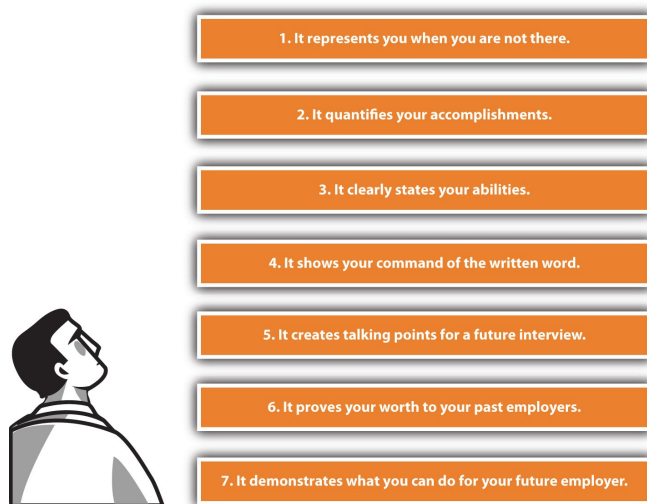
Once you have completely decoded the job description, you can start matching up your own experiences and qualifications to what the employer is looking for. This will be very helpful to have on hand as you start working on the next step of the process: creating your resume.

## Resumes

A resume is a selective record of your background—your educational, military, work experience, your certifications, abilities, and so on. You send it, sometimes accompanied by an application and a cover letter, to potential employers when you are seeking job interviews.

A resume should be easily readable, effectively designed, and adapted to audience expectations. If you're just starting your college education and have little work experience, try using the techniques and suggestions here to create a resume that represents your current skills, abilities, and background.

Figure 2 below presents the seven benefits that a well-written resume can do for you and your job search:



**Figure 2:** The benefits of a well-written resume. (CC BY 2017; Amber Kinonen)

## Résumé Design: An Overview

Before personal computers, people used one resume for varied kinds of employment searches. However, with less expensive desktop publishing and high-quality printing, people sometimes rewrite their resume for every new job they go after. For example, a person who seeks employment both with a community college and with a software-development company would use two different resumes. The contents of the two might be roughly the same, but the organization, format, and emphasis would be quite different.

You are probably aware of resume-writing software: you feed your data into them and they churn out a prefab resume. You probably also know about resume-writing services that will create your resume for you for a hundred dollars or so. If you are in a time bind or if you are extremely insecure about your writing or resume-designing skills, these services might help. Often, though, they take your information and put it into a computer database that then forces it into a prefab structure. They often use the same resume-writing software just mentioned; they charge you about what the software costs. The problem is that these agencies simply

cannot be that sensitive or perceptive about your background or your employment search. Nor are you likely to want to pay for their services every month or so when you are in the thick of a job search. Why not learn the skills and techniques of writing your own resume here, save the money, and write better resumes anyway?

There is no one right way to write a resume. Every person's background, employment needs, and career objectives are different, thus necessitating unique resume designs. Every aspect of your resume must start with who you are, what your background is, what the potential employer is looking for, and what your employment goals are—not with a prefab design.

## Sections in Resumes

Resumes can be divided into three sections: the heading, the body, and the conclusion. Each of these sections has fairly common contents.

**Heading.** The top third of the resume is the *heading*. It contains your name, phone number, address, and other details such as your occupation, titles, and so on. Some resume writers include the name of their profession, occupation, or field. In some examples, you'll see writers putting things like "CERTIFIED PHYSICAL THERAPIST" very prominently in the heading. Headings can also contain a professional summary or highlights. These two special subsections are described later.

**Body.** In a one-page resume, the body is the middle portion, taking up a half or more of the total space of the resume. In this section, you present the details of your work, education, and military experience. This information is arranged in **reverse chronological order**, where you start with your most recent experience and work backwards in time. In the body section, you also include your accomplishments, like publications, certifications, equipment you are familiar with, and so on. There are *many* ways to present this information:

- You can divide it **functionally**—into separate sections for work experience and education.
- You can divide it **thematically**—into separate sections for the different areas of your experience and education.

**Conclusion.** In the final third or quarter of the resume, you can present other related information on your background. For example, you can list activities, professional associations, memberships, hobbies, and interests. At first, you might think that listing non-work and personal information would be totally irrelevant and inappropriate. Actually, it can come in handy—it personalizes you to potential employers and gives you something to chat about while you're waiting for the coffee machine or the elevator. For example, if you mention in your resume that you raise goats, that gives the interviewer something to chat with you about during those moments of otherwise uncomfortable silence.

## Resume Types and Design

To begin planning your resume, decide which type of resume you need. This decision is in part based on requirements that prospective employers may have, and in part based on what your background and employment needs are.

**Type of organization.** Resumes can be defined according to how information on work and educational experience is handled. There are several basic, commonly used plans or designs you can consider using.

- **Functional design:** Illustrated schematically below in Figure 3, the functional design starts with a heading. Then it presents either education or work experience, whichever is stronger or more relevant, followed by the other of these two sections. Finally, it ends with a section on skills and certifications and one on personal information. Students who have not yet begun their careers often find this design the best for their purposes. People with military experience either work that detail into the education and work-experience sections as appropriate, or they create separate sections specifically for military experience at the same level as education and work experience.
- **Thematic design:** Another approach to resume is the thematic design, also illustrated schematically in Figure 3. It divides your experience and education into categories such as project management, budgetary planning, financial tracking, personnel management, customer sales, technical support, publications—whichever areas describe your experience. Often, these categories are based directly on typical or specific employment advertisements. If the job advertisement says that Company ABC wants a person with experience in training, customer service, and sales, then it might be a smart move to design thematic headings around those three requirements. If you want to use the thematic approach in your resume, take a look at your employment and educational experience—what are the common threads? Project management, program development, troubleshooting, supervision, maintenance, inventory control? Take a look at the job announcement you're responding to—what are the three, four, or five key requirements it mentions? Use these themes to design the body section of your resume. These themes become the headings in the body of the resume. Under these headings you list the employment or educational

experience that applies. For example, under a heading like "FINANCIAL RECORDS," you might list the accounting and bookkeeping courses you took in college, the company-sponsored seminars on Excel you took, and the jobs where you actually used these skills.

**Type of information.** Types of resume can be defined according to the amount and kind of information they present:

- **Objective resumes:** This type just gives dates, names, and titles, but no qualitative salesmanship information. These are very lean, terse resumes. In business writing courses, you are typically asked not to write this type. The objective-resume style is useful when you want to use a thematic approach or emphasize the summary/highlights section. By its very nature, you can see that the thematic approach is unclear about the actual history of employment. It's harder to tell where the person was, what she was doing, year by year.
- **Detailed resumes:** This type provides not only dates, titles, and names, but also details about your responsibilities and statements about the quality and effectiveness of your work. This is the type most people write, and the type that is the focus of most business writing courses. The rest of the details in this section of this chapter focus on writing the detailed resume.

### Layout and Detail Format in Resumes

At some point in your resume planning, you'll want to think schematically about the layout and design of the thing. General layout has to do with the design and location of the heading, the headings for the individual sections, and the orientation of the detailed text in relation to those headings. Detail formats are the way you choose to arrange and present the details of your education and work experience.

**Layout.** Some resumes have the headings centered; others are on the left margin. The actual text—the paragraphs—of resumes typically does not extend to the far left and the far right margins. Full-length lines are not considered as **readable** or **scannable** as the shorter ones you see illustrated in the examples in this book.

Many resumes use a "**hanging-head**" format. In this case, the heading starts on the far left margin while the text is indented another inch or so. This format makes the heading stand out more and the text more scannable. Notice also that in some of the text paragraphs of resumes, special typography is used to highlight the name of the organization or the job title.

**Detail formats.** You have to make a fundamental decision about how you present the details of your work and education experience. Several examples of typical presentational techniques are shown below. The elements you work with include:

- Occupation, position, or job title
- Company or organization name
- Time period you were there (including the month and year for both the beginning and end of your employment)
- Key details about your accomplishments and responsibilities while there.

There are many different ways to format this information. It all depends on what you want to emphasize and how much or how little information you have (whether you are struggling to fit it all on one page or struggling to make it fill one page). Several different detail formats are shown throughout this chapter, but the most important thing is to be consistent with whatever format you choose. For example, if you list your job title on one line and then the name of the company you worked for on the line below it, that should be the format you use for every entry you create.

### Special Sections in Resumes

Here are some ideas for special resume sections that emphasize your particular skills or qualifications.

**Highlights.** In some resumes, you may notice a "Highlights" section that occurs just below the heading and just above the main experience and education sections. This is an increasingly popular section in resumes since resume specialists believe that the eye makes first contact with a page somewhere one-fourth to one-third of the way down the page—not at the very top. If that is the case, then it makes sense to put your very "best stuff" at that point. Therefore, some people list their most important qualifications, their key skills, their key work experience in that space on the page. Actually, this section is useful more for people who have been in their careers for a while. It's a good way to create one common spot on the resume to list those key qualifications about yourself that may be spread throughout the resume. Otherwise, these key details about yourself are scattered across your various employment and educational experience—in fact, they may be buried by them.

**Professional profile.** Also called a **career summary**, a professional profile is a section that can be found on some resumes just under the heading and briefly describes key qualifications, experiences, and goals as they relate to the specific job for which you're

applying. Think about this section as your professional "headline": what is it about you as an individual that makes you uniquely qualified for this position? Try to answer that question in brief phrases that connect to the key responsibilities from the job description, written in the imperative voice (avoiding "I" statements as much as possible.) A professional profile section is similar to a highlights section, but shorter (usually between two and four sentences) and in paragraph rather than list form.

### Early-Career Resumes

If you are at the beginning of your career, all the advice and examples to this point may seem fine and good, but what if you have very little experience? Careers must start somewhere—and so must resumes. You can use several strategies to fill out your resume so that you appear to be the promising entry-level candidate that we all know you are.

- Cite relevant projects that you've worked on, both in academia and in your community, even if they are not exactly related to the career that you pursue.
- Spend extra time describing college courses and programs you have been involved in. Think about successful team projects, research projects, or reports you have completed while working on your degree.
- Include volunteer work that has required you to use any skills related to your industry. (If you've not done any volunteer work, get to volunteering!)
- List any organizations you have been a member of and describe any of their activities that have any trace of technical in them. (If you've not belonged to any business or professional organizations, get to belonging!)
- Use formatting to spread what information you have to fill out the resume page.

Resumes can include co-op and part-time work. Bulleted-lists extends the length of a the resume so that it fills up the page. At the bottom of the resume, a writer can list awards and organizations. These too can be amplified if necessary. Details as to what the award is about, why this writer received it, and what those organizations are—these are examples of good information that could be added, if necessary.

Subtle changes in format can also help make your resume fill a page. Top, bottom, left, and right margins can all be pushed down, up, and in from the standard 1.0 inch to 1.25 inches if needed. You can add an extra space between sections. To do so, don't just press Enter. Instead, use the paragraph-formatting feature of your software to put 6 or 9 points, for example, below the final element of each section. Line spacing is another subtle way to extend a resume. If your software by default uses 13.6 points of line spacing for Times New Roman 12 point text, experiment with changing the line spacing to exactly 15.0 points.

### Résumé Checklist

As you plan, write, and review your resume, keep these points in mind:

- **Readability:** are there any dense paragraphs over 6 lines? Imagine your prospective employer sitting down to a two-inch stack of resumes. Do you think they are going to slow down to read through big thick paragraphs? Probably not. Try to keep paragraphs under 6 lines long. The "hanging-head" design helps here.
- **White space.** Picture a resume crammed with detail, using only half-inch margins all the way around, a small type size, and only a small amount of space between parts of the resume. Our prospective employer might be less inclined to work through that also. "Air it out!" Find ways to incorporate more white space in the margins and between sections of the resume. Again, the "hanging-head" design is also useful.
- **Special format.** Make sure that you use a special format consistently throughout the resume. For example, if you use a hanging-head style for the work-experience section, use it in the education section as well.
- **Consistent margins.** Most resumes have several margins: the outermost, left margin and at least one internal left margin. Typically, paragraphs in a resume use an internal margin, not the far-left margin. Make sure to align all appropriate text to these margins as well. Avoid unnecessary multiple margins: they give your resume a ragged messy look.
- **Terse writing style.** It's okay to use a rather clipped, terse writing style in resumes—up to a point. The challenge in most resumes is to get it all on one page (or two if you have a lot of information to present). Instead of writing "I supervised a team of five technicians..." you write, "Supervised a team of five technicians..." However, you don't leave out normal words such as articles.

- **Bold, italics, different type size, caps, other typographical special effects.** Use special typography, but keep it under control. Resumes are great places to use all of your fancy word-processing features such as bold, italics, different fonts, and different type sizes. Don't go crazy with it! Too much fancy typography can be distracting (plus make people think you are hyperactive). Also, whatever special typography you use, be consistent with it throughout the resume. If some job titles are italics, make them all italics. Avoid all-caps text—it's less readable.
- **Page fill.** Do everything you can to make your resume fill out one full page and to keep it from spilling over by four or five lines to a second page. At the beginning of your career, it's tough filling up a full page of a resume. As you move into your career, it gets hard keeping it to one page. If you need a two-page resume, see that the second page is full or nearly full.
- **Clarity of boundary lines between major sections.** Design and format your resume so that whatever the main sections are, they are very noticeable. Use well-defined headings and white space to achieve this. Similarly, design your resume so that the individual segments of work experience or education are distinct and separate from each other.
- **Reverse chronological order.** Remember to list your education and work-experience items starting with the current or most recent and working backwards in time.
- **Consistency of phrasing.** Use the same style of phrasing for similar information in a resume—for example, past tense verbs for all descriptions of past work experience.
- **Consistency of punctuation style.** For similar sections of information use the same kind of punctuation—for example, periods, commas, colons, or nothing.
- **Translations for "inside" information.** Don't assume readers will know what certain abbreviations, acronyms, or symbols mean—yes, even to the extent of "GPA" or the construction "3.2/4.00." Take time to describe special organizations you may be a member of.
- **Grammar, spelling, usage.** Watch out for these problems on a resume—they stand out like a sore thumb! Watch out particularly for the incorrect use of its and it's.

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Cell: 917.333.5555

**OBJECTIVE:**

To secure an entry-level position in the health care industry, using my volunteer experience, along with my client focus, and results-oriented approach.

**EDUCATION:**

**University of Wisconsin**, Madison, WI  
BS degree, expected Spring 2013  
Major: health care, Minor: communications  
GPA: 3.8

**HONORS:**

- Heath Care Award recipient, Wisconsin General Hospital, 2011
- University of Wisconsin Student Government, elected junior class president, 2011
- Dean's List, 2010, 2011
- Senator Smith Scholarship for Academic Excellence, 2010
- Pi Kappa Delta
- Silver Helmet National Honor Society

**LEADERSHIP SKILLS:**

- President, health care club, 2011, member 2008–2012
- Treasurer, nutrition club, 2010, member 2009–2012
- Captain, varsity tennis team, 2009–2012 and state singles champion, 2009

**HEALTH CARE VOLUNTEER ACTIVITIES:**

- Volunteer reader, Mercy General Hospital, 2007–Present
- Gift shop volunteer, Mercy General Hospital, 2009–Present

**COMMUNITY VOLUNTEER ACTIVITIES:**

- Fun Run, Memorial Half Marathon, 2009–Present
- Wisconsin Cares volunteer, Coat Collection Drive, 2010
- Tennis coach, Wisconsin Special Olympics, 2008–2010

**COMPUTER SKILLS:**

- Microsoft Office Suite: Word, Excel, and PowerPoint
- Apple formats, Photoshop, and UNIX platforms
- LexisNexis and VISIO
- Programming skills: C++

Figure 5: Sample Thematic Résumé. (CC BY 2017; Amber Kinonen)



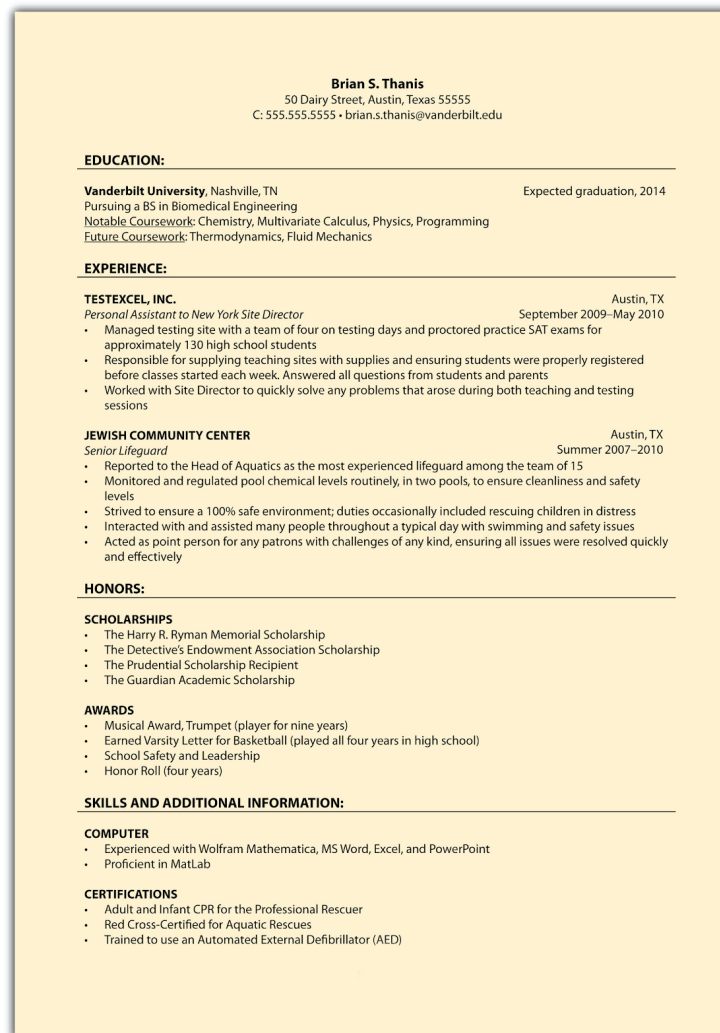


Figure 6: Sample Functional Resume 2. (CC BY 2017; Amber Kinonen)

## Cover Letters

In many job applications, you attach an **application** or **cover letter** to your resume. In actuality, the letter should come before the resume .

The role of the cover letter is to draw a clear connection between the job you are seeking and your qualifications listed in the resume . To put it another way, the letter matches the requirements of the job with your qualifications, emphasizing how you are right for that job. The cover letter is not a lengthy summary of the resume. Instead, it selectively mentions information in the resume, elaborating on it as appropriate.

### Cover Letters: Their Purpose

When writing a cover letter, remember that you probably have competition. Your audience is a professional who screens and hires job applicants—someone who may look through dozens or even hundreds of other applications on the day they receive yours. The immediate objective of your application/cover letter and accompanying resume is to attract this person's attention. Your ultimate goal is to obtain an interview.

As you write your cover letter, be sure you complete three tasks: catch the reader's attention favorably, convince the reader that you are a qualified candidate for the job, and request an interview. A cover letter should accomplish the following five things:

1. Identify the job by title and let the recipient know how you heard about it.
2. Summarize your qualifications for the job, specifically your work experience, activities that show your leadership skills, and your educational background.



3. Refer the reader to your enclosed resume.
4. Ask for an interview, stating where you can be reached and when you will be available. If your prospective employer is located in another city and you plan to visit the area, mention the dates for your trip.
5. If you are applying for a specific job, include any information pertinent to the position that is not included in your resume.

### Types of Cover Letters

To begin planning your letter, decide which type of cover letter you need. This decision is based both on employers' requirements and on what your background and employment needs are. In many ways, types of cover letters are like the types of resumes. The types of cover letters can be defined according to amount and kind of information:

- **Objective letters**—One type of letter says very little: it identifies the position being sought, indicates an interest in having an interview, and calls attention to the fact that the resume is attached. It also mentions any other special matters that are not included on the resume, such as dates and times when you are available to come in for an interview. This letter does no salesmanship and is very brief. (It represents the true meaning of "cover" letter.)
- **Highlight letters**—Another type of letter, the type you do for most business writing courses, tries to summarize the key information from the resume, the key information that will emphasize that you are a good candidate for the job. In other words, it selects the best information from the resume and summarizes it in the letter—this type of letter is especially designed to make the connection with the specific job.

Preparation and practice are critical to every step of the job search process, and the cover letter is no different. Five actions can help make your cover letter compelling:

1. Make a list of your top ten strengths.
2. Make a list of your top five weaknesses (also known as areas you would like to strengthen).
3. Decipher the job description to identify each separate skill and qualification.
4. Compare the two lists to see if they are in alignment. Also identify the gaps: does the job description list something you haven't done?
5. Highlight your top three skills that align with the job description, as you will use them in your cover letter.

Your cover letter should be engaging, informative, and show your command of the written word. It should flow easily from a reader's perspective, making the connection between the opportunity and your ability to succeed if given the chance. The tone should be compelling. You should be excited about the opportunity and you should be confident of your ability to succeed (even if you truly lack the confidence).

### Cover Letter Template

The application/cover letter template includes three main sections:

1. The introductory paragraph
2. The magic middle
3. The last paragraph, which reiterates your interest

**The Introductory Paragraph.** In the introductory paragraph, you introduce yourself to the hiring manager or recruiter. That first paragraph of the application letter is the most important; it sets everything up—the **tone**, **focus**, as well as your most important **qualification**. A typical problem in the introductory paragraph involves diving directly into work and educational experience. The paragraph should include three general items:

1. State the purpose of the letter—to inquire about an employment opportunity.
2. Indicate the source of your information about the job—newspaper advertisement, a personal contact, or other.
3. State one eye-catching, attention-getting thing about yourself in relation to the job or to the employer that will cause the reader to want to continue.

These three items should be covered very quickly, the space of very short paragraph—no more than 3 to 4 lines of the standard business letter.

**Main Body Paragraphs.** In the main parts of the application letter, you present your work experience, education, and training—whatever makes that connection between you and the job you are seeking. Remember that this is the most important job you have to do in this letter—to enable the reader see the match between your qualifications and the requirements for the job.

There are two common ways to present this information:

- **Functional approach**—This one presents education in one section, and work experience in the other. If there were military experience, that might go in another section. Whichever of these sections contains your "best stuff" should come first, after the introduction.
- **Thematic approach**—This one divides experience and education into groups such as "management," "technical," "financial," and so on and then discusses your work and education related to them in separate paragraphs.

Another section worth considering for the main body of the application/cover letter is one in which you discuss your goals, objectives (the focus of your career), what you are doing, or want to do professionally. A paragraph like this is particularly good for people just starting their careers, when there is not much to put in the letter. Of course, be careful about loading a paragraph like this with "sweet nothings." For example, "I am seeking a challenging, rewarding career with a dynamic upscale company where I will have ample room for professional and personal growth"—come on, give us a break! You might as well say, "I want to be happy, well-paid, and well-fed."

One of the best ways to make a cover letter stand out is to work in details, examples, specifics about related aspects of your educational and employment background. Yes, if the resume is attached, readers can see all that details there. However, a letter that is overly general and vague might generate so little interest that the reader might not even care to turn to the resume.

In the cover letter, you work in selective detail that makes your letter stand out, makes it memorable, and substantiates the claims you make about your skills and experience. Take a look at this example, which is rather lacking in specifics:

#### Example

**As for my experience working with persons with developmental disabilities, I have worked and volunteered at various rehabilitation hospitals and agencies in Austin and Houston [which ones? Be specific to inject more detail into this letter]. I have received training [where? certificates?] in supervising patients and assisting with physical and social therapy [which specific therapies?]. Currently, I am volunteering at St. David's Hospital [doing what?] to continue my education in aiding persons with developmental disabilities [which specific disabilities?].**

Now take a look at the revision:

#### Example

**I am passionate about working with persons with developmental disabilities, and have worked and volunteered at Cypress Creek Hospital in Houston and Capital Area Easter Seals/ Rehabilitation Center and Health South Rehabilitation Hospital in Austin. I have received CPR, First Aid, and Crisis Intervention certificates from Cypress Creek Hospital. Currently, I am volunteering at St. David's Hospital assisting with physical therapy to persons with developmental disabilities in the aquatics department.**

These edits take general information and make it more specific, developing a narrative around something that might just get a bullet point on the resume. This makes the information much more engaging and memorable for the reader, which will help make you more memorable to the hiring manager.

**Closing Paragraph.** In the last paragraph of the cover letter, you can indicate how the prospective employer can get in touch with you and when are the best times for an **interview**. This is the place to urge that prospective employer to contact you to arrange an interview.

Remember that this is still a business letter, so make sure to have a professional salutation and closing. Put extra effort into identifying the name of the hiring manager, so that your letter can be appropriately addressed to the specific person who will be reviewing resumes. Employers do not make this an easy step for you, and you have to do your research. Helpful exercises include researching the company website, reading news releases, and even calling the company to ask. Laziness will hurt your job search effort if this special effort is not made. If, after doing all the preceding, you still do not know the name of the person to whom you are sending your information, by all means, address it using Dear Hiring Manager or Dear Recruiter.



Figure 7: Example of a Cover Letter. (CC BY 2017; Amber Kinonen)

### Early-Career Cover Letters

In the preceding, you've seen some impressive cover letters. But what if you don't have all that experience—how do you construct a respectable application/cover letter?

- Cite relevant projects (both in academia and community) you've worked on, even if they are not exactly related to the career that you pursue.
- Spend extra time describing college courses and programs you have been involved in. What about team projects, research projects, or reports?
- Include volunteer work that has had any trace of technical in it. (If you've not done any volunteer work, get to volunteering!)
- List any organizations you have been a member of and describe any of their activities that have any trace of technical in them. (If you've not belonged to any technically oriented organizations, get to belonging!)
- As with the resume, you can use formatting to spread what information you have to fill out the resume page.

### Checklist for Application Cover Letters

- **Readability and white space**—Are there any dense paragraphs over 8 lines? Are there comfortable 1-inch to 1.5-inch margins all the way around the letter? Is there adequate spacing between paragraphs and between the components of the letter?
- **Page fill**—Is the letter placed on the page nicely: not crammed at the top one-half of the page; not spilling over to a second page by only three or four lines?
- **General neatness, professional-looking quality**—Is the letter on good quality paper, and is the copy clean and free of smudges and erasures?
- **Proper use of the business-letter format**—Have you set up the letter in one of the standard business-letter formats? (See the references earlier in this chapter.)
- **Overt, direct indication of the connection between your background and the requirements of the job**—Do you emphasize this connection?
- **A good upbeat, positive tone**—Is the tone of your letter bright and positive? Does it avoid sounding overly aggressive, brash, over-confident (unless that is really the tone you want)? Does your letter avoid the opposite problem of sounding stiff, overly reserved, stand-offish, blasé, indifferent?
- **A good introduction**—Does your introduction establish the purpose of the letter? Does it avoid diving directly into the details of your work and educational experience? Do you present one little compelling detail about yourself that will cause the reader to want to keep reading?
- **A good balance between brevity and details**—Does your letter avoid becoming too detailed (making readers less inclined to read thoroughly)? Does your letter avoid the opposite extreme of being so general that it could refer to practically anybody?
- **Lots of specifics (dates, numbers, names, etc.)**—Does your letter present plenty of specific detail but without making the letter too densely detailed? Do you present hard factual details (numbers, dates, proper names) that make you stand out as an individual?
- **A minimum of information that is simply your opinion of yourself**—Do you avoid over-reliance on information that is simply your opinions about yourself? For example, instead of saying that you "work well with others," do you cite work experience that proves that fact but without actually stating it?
- **Grammar, spelling, usage**—And of course, does your letter use correct grammar, usage, and spelling?

### Networking

A great way to meet people and market yourself is through **networking**. A long time ago, people would network at events in person. This was a great way to talk to someone give your "elevator speech" and get to know them. People would exchange business cards which could ultimately lead to job opportunities. Now in the digital age, people network a bit differently. There are still events you can attend; however, you can do most of your networking through social media. Many employers now have links to Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, and Twitter. These are platforms that allow you to connect with people and post job opportunities.

One important piece of advice: be careful of what you put on social media as employers may look at your social media to determine if you are a good fit for their organization. There is much debate if employers should be allowed to use these platforms to make employment decisions. Whether you agree with this practice or not, if your social media presence is available to an employer, it is something that can influence whether or not you get called in to an interview or get offered a job. Because of this, make sure to keep your public social media as neutral as possible, and avoid potentially damaging posts or pictures on your feed. On professional sites like LinkedIn, make sure your information current and up-to-date. If you have been hesitant to use social media for your personal life, exploring the opportunities that exist on professional platforms like LinkedIn might be a good place to start.

### Conclusion

The job search process can feel overwhelming. Remember to start with researching what type of job you are looking for to start your career or move into a different journey. Once you have found some jobs that fit where you are in your career, take a look at the

job description and note how your experiences fit what the employer is looking for in their position. You want to make sure your cover/application letter covers those points highlighted in the job description. Your resume will either be functional or chronological. You will gear your resume towards the job in which you are applying. You might have multiple versions of your resume based on the types of jobs you are applying. Be creative and make your resume and cover letter stand out. Employers have many job applications packages to review, so you want to make sure they look at it and pick you for an interview.

**All links live as of June 2021.**

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