Professional Communication

Throughout the application process, written documents such as the cover letter are just as important as the resume. This presentation is designed to help you prepare application materials and further develop your professional communication skills. Please CLICK on links throughout the presentation as there will be questions from these links on the quiz.
This presentation will focus on steps 1, 4 and 6 of this process, but will also include information about professional communication in the job search process.
What is a Cover Letter?

The purpose of the cover letter is to introduce yourself to an organization, demonstrate your interest in the company or a specific vacancy, draw attention to your resume and motivate the reader to interview you. Often this letter is the first contact you have with a prospective employer.
A cover letter should do three main things:

Let the employer know your reason for contacting them

Connect your skills, interests, and academic background with what the employer seeks in a new hire

Articulate how you’re a good fit for the position through specific examples
Cover Letter Format & Appearance

- Cover letters follow the format of a standard professional letter.
- Write a customized cover letter for every job application, tailored to the position requirements.
- Focus on the positive, you can address areas where you lack experience in an interview (if it comes up).

Your cover letter should never be more than one page, preferably with balanced white space.

Use the same font as your resume and make sure your contact information matches the other materials you are sending.

Proofread carefully, and have a friend read it too. Vary sentence openings, and don’t start them all with “I”.
Anatomy of a Cover Letter

**Header**

The heading provides your contact information, the date you are writing, and the address of the company to which you are applying. This can match the header of your resume, but it doesn't have to as long as the font is the same.

**Salutation & Introduction**

Address your letter to the hiring manager, research the name not listed. If you can't find a name, address the letter “Dear Hiring Manager”. Don’t use “To Whom It May Concern”.

Demonstrate your knowledge of the organization’s mission and goals and how your background, interests and experience connect. This is your case for why they should hire you!

**Body**

Show how you are a good fit for the position. Point out relevant experience and education with specific examples that do more than restate what’s on your resume.

Emphasize the most relevant qualifications. When possible, use keywords from the position posting. State the value you would bring to the organization. Show how you make a good match for the position.

**Closing**

Express your appreciation for the hiring manager’s time. If calls are allowed, indicate you will follow up.

If you’re emailing the letter, you can insert an electronic signature, or simply type your name below the closing in the same font and size as the rest of the letter.
The Cover Letter

Header

Your Address
Any City, State 12345 [2 spaces]

Date [4 spaces]

Contact's Name
Title
Organization
Address
City, State Zip [2 spaces]

Dear (Dr., Mr., or Ms. Last Name): [2 spaces]

Opening Paragraph: Begin the letter by stating why you are writing and why you are interested in that particular internship/job/organization. When possible, name the position for which you are applying and how you heard of the opening. Be sure to mention your degree and the institution you graduated from. If you are writing as a result of a personal referral, someone known to the reader, state it in the first sentence (be sure to have the person's permission to use his/her name.)

Middle Paragraph(s): Describe your interest in the position. Refer to your academic training and highlight any relevant work experience as it relates to the specific qualifications of the position. Emphasize how your experiences can be of value to this particular position or organization. Present the most relevant information you want the employer to consider. Balance confidence with humility. It should merely sum up what you have to offer and act as an introduction of your resume.

Closing Paragraph: State your desire to arrange an interview. Make it easy for the employer to respond by: 1) including your telephone number and the times when you are available to receive calls, 2) indicating when you will contact the employer, or 3) stating when you will be available for an interview. [2 spaces]

Sincerely, [4 spaces]

Sign Your Name
Your Name (Typed) [2 spaces]
Common Cover Letter Mistakes

1. Sending a resume without a cover letter
2. “To Whom it May Concern”
3. Telling the employer what they can do for you
4. Leaving the ball in the employer’s court
5. Being boring or prescribed in your delivery
6. Typos, misspellings and poor grammar
7. Rehashing your resume
8. Failing to tailor your letter to the job you’re applying for
9. Rambling on too long
10. Using wimpy language

Check out this link:
http://www.quintcareers.com/cover_letter_mistakes.html
Thank You Letters/Notes

Sending a brief letter or note of thanks following an interview to convey appreciation for the opportunity is often overlooked. Some sources estimate only 10% of interviewees send a thank you letter.

The format of the thank you depends on the organizational culture. A formal business letter (typed, printed out, and mailed) is standard and always appropriate. Email may be appropriate if a decision is to be made quickly or if most correspondence has been via email, but an email can be perceived as less effort on your part. A “Thank You” note card with a handwritten message inside is always acceptable.

- Use the thank you note to reiterate your interest in the position, to clarify or include information that may not have come up in the interview, and to emphasize your qualifications for the job.
- The letter should be brief and to the point. The main point is to say “thank you” for the interview.
- The letter should be sent within two days of the interview.
Thank You Letter Tips

• You should send letters to everyone in the organization who interviewed you. This can include the human resources manager, the hiring manager, and anyone else who spent a significant amount of time with you during the interview process.

• If you are unsure of names or titles, look them up on the website or call human resources to verify. You can also collect business cards and/or contact information after the interview.

• This is another writing sample – there should be no spelling or grammatical errors.

• Refer to the position by name. Human resource managers may be interviewing people for several positions simultaneously.
Thank You Letter Tips

• Express your sincere interest in the position.
• Thank the interviewer for their time, the opportunity, the information, and their consideration.
• As in your cover letter, convey enthusiasm for the position.
• The note can be an opportunity to supply additional information that did not come up in your interview, or to clarify issues that you feel you did not adequately address.
• Close the communication by reiterating your appreciation, and offering any additional information if the interviewer has further questions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Your Name</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Your Address</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Your City, State, Zip Code</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Your Phone Number</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Your Email</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Date

Name
Title
Organization
Address
City, State, Zip Code

Dear Mr./Ms. Last Name:

Use the first paragraph to thank the interviewer for taking the time to meet with you. Mention your interest in the job and how enthusiastic you are about it.

The second paragraph of your thank you letter should include the reasons why you are an excellent candidate for the job. List specific skills that relate to the job you interviewed for. The more detailed you are, the more the interviewer will know about your qualifications.

The third paragraph (optional) can be used to mention anything that you didn’t bring up at the interview that you’d like the employer to know.

In your closing paragraph, reiterate your appreciation for being considered for the job and let the interviewer know you are looking forward to hearing from him or her soon.

Sincerely,
Your Signature
Your Typed Name
Typically, an employer will check references after the interview, but prior to an offer being made. However, some employers may check references earlier as part of the screening process.

So, what exactly are references?

• References are people who can talk about your work experience, work habits, character and skills.

• As part of the job search process, you may be asked to provide the names of people whom a potential employer can contact to find out more about you.

• Choose carefully! It is a good idea to choose people who can speak or write favorably about you and your work. This will improve your chances of getting the job.

Learn more about references:
http://www.quintcareers.com/job_references.html
## Other Job Search Letters

### Follow-up Letter
A follow-up letter is sent to an employer with whom you have already made contact. The goals are to keep your name salient in the recruiter’s mind, to demonstrate initiative, and/or to simply keep in touch for future interactions.

### Withdrawal Letter
The withdrawal letter is used to inform an employer that they should no longer consider you a candidate. This letter is written to acknowledge the employer’s efforts as well as decline an offer in a professional manner.

### Prospecting Letter
This letter is used to inquire/prospect about vacancies at an organization. The aim of this letter is NOT to gather information about different job opportunities. Rather, this letter states “Here are my qualifications.” If there is a vacancy in which you are a good match, your letter will “catch his/her eye.” Follow-up is essential!

### Rejection Letter
The rejection letter is used when an offer has been extended to you and the decision to decline the offer is made. Generally, this letter is very brief (1-2 paragraphs) and is done in a constructive manner so as to help keep the door open.
Tips for Professional Correspondence

• Try not to sound too formal or distant in your writing style. Strike a balance between professional crispness and personal warmth when you write your letter. But do NOT use conversational wording.

• If you feel you are lacking specific qualifications for a position, do NOT apologize for what you perceive as a deficiency. Stress your strengths and sound positive and confident.

• Form (template) letters will more than likely not be read. Be sure your original is prepared on the same size and color paper as your résumé.

• Avoid the temptation to write conversationally, especially in thank you letters.

• Make sure to keep in contact with your network and companies of great interest to you.

• Keep a copy of each letter for your file.

• Proofread your letters!! Be certain that the letter is clean, attractive, and accurate.
3 Simple Rules for Emailing Potential Employers

1- Always Be Business-like in Employment Related Email
   - Always err on the side of formality.
   - When replying to an employer’s email, follow their lead on what greeting to use.
   - If a hiring manager signed their message with their first name, then you should use it in your greeting. If they use their full name or some variation of their last name (Mr. Jones, Steven Jones), then greet them using their last name.

2- Watch Your Tone
   - Watch out for the case you use when writing messages (over-use of caps in email makes it look like you are shouting).
   - Make sure you select terms and phrases that can’t be read more than one way, especially if the person isn’t familiar with how you speak.
   - Be concise, the more complex your sentences become the easier it is to be misinterpreted.

3- Represent Yourself Well in Your Writing
   - Carefully compose every message, proofreading before you hit send.
   - Employers are most impressed with emails that are articulate and to-the-point.
   - Employers don’t like bad punctuation, grammatical errors and misspellings as it gives the impression that you don’t pay attention to detail.
The Acceptance Letter

• Whether by standard mail or email, if you have accepted a job offer, it is always a good idea to send a job acceptance letter. This is a way to outline the details of the job, an opportunity to thank those with whom you've met, as well as confirm the start day of your employment.

• It should be addressed to the person who formally offered you the position and should briefly outline the details of employment including salary, benefits and any other items that were agreed upon.

• Even though you have the job, you should always keep it professional. This correspondence is part of the ongoing impression you will make as an employee of the company.
Need more information?

Career Services Website:  
http://www.semo.edu/careers/

Schedule an appointment to have your materials reviewed by contacting: 
Career Services  
Academic Hall- Room 057  
573-651-2583  
careerservices@semo.edu