

# INF1030 Assignment Seven

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Alright. So you know you want to be a (*insert the profession of your choice here*) and you have found the perfect job for yourself. The next part of the process is to apply for the job. Applying for a job is a lot more involved than walking into a business and asking for work. Great forethought and effort should be put into constructing your job application package. A successful application package consists of at least the following:

- a job application
- a resume
- a cover letter
- more and more companies want to see a portfolio of your work, particularly if you are doing anything in creative or skill based areas. However, because you won't have your portfolio done until the end semester, we won't worry about that right now.

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## Cover Letter

If you think you don't need to put much effort into writing cover letters -- or don't need to send them at all because nobody reads them -- think again. True, many human resource recruiters, headhunters and department heads don't have time to read both the letter and resume, so they skip right to the resume. Others are so tired of boring letters saying the same old thing that they simply don't bother to read them. As a result, some job search coaches will tell you, "Oh, just write a few sentences and don't fuss over the letter too much. It won't get read anyway."

Well, for every person who says the cover letter is not important you'll find another who says it is. Many prospective employers view the cover letter as a way of getting their first impression of you. The cover letter reveals:

- how well you communicate
- what your experience and qualifications are -- briefly
- your level of professionalism
- clues to your personality
- how detail oriented you are (i.e., are there typos or other errors?)

To make the best first impression, you need to know exactly what a cover letter is and to put some thought into it before you start writing. You also need to understand what to include -- and not to include. There is a formula that can be followed for cover letters. However, it is critical that your letter is unique and specific to you -- not one that any applicant could have written. Finally, remember that your likely only have about 20 seconds to wow the reader of your letter, so make it dynamic!

Open up Microsoft Word and look for a "Cover Letter" template. Choose one that suits your personality, and use that as a basis for your assignment.

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**If you're bewildered by how you're actually going to write a cover letter, it can help to break the letter down into its various parts and concentrate on just one section at a time. Here's what goes into each of the four main sections of a cover letter:**

### **The Opening**

This is where you tell employers who you are, why you're writing and how you heard about the organization or the specific opening. The "who you are" part is a brief introduction of yourself with a phrase like: "I am a senior at XYZ University graduating in May with a major in biology." Just mention the basic facts about you and your situation, choosing the ones that will be most relevant to the employer. The "why you're writing" part is where you mention which position you are applying for, or what your job objective is if no specific opening has been advertised. Then be sure to tell them how you heard about the organization or the job. You might say, for example, "I saw your listing for a textile designer at the Career Development Office of the Gopher Stump School of Design." Or, "I read about the expansion of your East Coast operations in the Greater Puget Times and am interested in discussing entry-level opportunities you might have available."

### **The Sales Pitch**

In this section, it's best to get right to the point. The objective of this part of the letter is to list in paragraph form the reasons why the reader should see you as a viable candidate. It's best to start with a statement that provides an overview of your qualifications, then go into them more specifically, using the examples you identified before you started writing. A typical opening statement might sound something like: "As a political science major and former Cabinet intern, I offer the following skills and accomplishments."

### **The Flattery**

This is the "why them" section of your letter. It's where you flatter the reader a bit by commenting on something positive about the organization and letting them know why you would want to work there. You might mention the organization's reputation, sales record, size, corporate culture, management philosophy or anything else that they take pride in. Prospective employers like to know that you have chosen them for a reason and that they're not just one of hundreds of companies you're writing to as part of a mass mailing. (Even if you are doing a mass mailing, you must tailor each letter to "flatter" the reader and show that you've done some research on that organization or that person.)

### **The Request for Further Action**

Some people think of this final section of a cover letter as the closing, but it's much more than that. The closing paragraph isn't just about thanking the reader for taking the time to read your letter or for considering you as a candidate for a job. It's also about where to go from here -- about opening the door to further contact. It's where you suggest how to proceed, usually by saying that you will call or email the reader to follow up and see if a meeting can be arranged. The important thing is to end the letter in an assertive, but courteous, way by taking the initiative to follow up.

Once you've gotten the four sections of the letter completed in terms of content, go back and smooth out any rough edges of your writing and check for typos, misspellings and grammatical errors. Then you're ready for "Sincerely" or "Best Regards" and your signature, and you're off and running on the road to a great job.

**Assignment**

Using the above criteria, write a cover letter for one of the job postings you found in Assignment Six.

Ensure your letter is proofread, polished, and uses proper formatting. It should be no longer than one (single-spaced, size 12 font) page.

Want to see some concrete examples? Follow these links to some:

[Email Cover Letter](#)

<http://jobsearch.about.com/od/coverlettersamples/a/emailcovermessage.htm>

[Entry Level Inquiry Letter](#)

<http://jobsearch.about.com/od/coverlettersamples/a/inquiry2.htm>

[Entry Level Cover Letter](#)

<http://jobsearch.about.com/od/coverlettersamples/a/coveranalyst.htm>

Marking Guide:

Letter matches job chosen in Assignment 6	/2
Includes personal contact information	/1
Includes company contact information	/1
Effectively formatted (Can use the 4 paragraphs above if you choose)	/8
Each paragraph includes appropriate content	/4
<u>Accuracy, spelling, and formatting</u>	<u>/4</u>
Total	/20