

# Cover Letters

---

## A GOOD COVER LETTER CAN MAKE THE DIFFERENCE

A well-constructed professional resume is an essential tool for your job search, but it is not the only tool. A good cover letter is as important as your resume. Do your homework! Do some research so that you can say something about that employer in the cover letter. A letter is much more effective if it is individualized. Find out the name and title of the contact person so that you can address your letter to that person. **The purpose of a cover letter is to communicate a message to an employer in a way that will stimulate a positive response.**

This is a valuable tool through which you have the opportunity to sell yourself. While you are limited to stating facts on your resume, the cover letter provides you an opportunity to draw conclusions, make inferences, and elaborate on specifics. You don't want to reiterate your resume, but you certainly can highlight it.

A well-written cover letter serves as an extension of your resume. Since you will be composing an original letter for each potential employer, you can tailor the information to each particular position. The following are important points to remember:

1. Adapt each cover letter to a specific employer and/or situation.
2. Use simple, direct language and correct grammar.
3. Your letter should be flawlessly typed.
4. Keep the letter short and concise.
5. Use a standard business letter format with the body centered on the page and equal margins on the sides.
6. Use quality paper to match your resume. Be sure to have matching business size envelopes.

7. Keep a copy of your correspondence for future reference.
8. Your letter should be an introduction to your resume, not a review of it.
9. Each cover letter should be addressed to a specific person and personally signed. If you don't know the name of the hiring partner, call the firm and find out. You can use the Career Strategies phone to do this.
10. Each letter should be your own. **Never copy a letter word-for-word from an example.**

## Guidelines for a Cover Letter

Street Address (2 1/2" Top Margin)

City, State, Zip

Telephone

Date

(3 Spaces)

Ms. Mary Smith  
Smith, Brooks & Bowers  
Street Address  
City, State, Zip

(2 Spaces)

Dear Ms. Smith:

(2 Spaces)

**First Paragraph.** Key: Grab the attention of the employer. State the reason for the letter, the specific position or type of work for which you are applying, and indicate from which resource (placement office, news media, directory, friend, etc.) you learned of the opening or how you became familiar with their company.

(2 Spaces)

**Second Paragraph.** Indicate why you are interested in the position, the company, its location and what you can do for them. You might want to explain how your academic background or your experience makes you a qualified candidate. Emphasize specific achievements or unique qualifications but **do not** repeat everything on your resume. (Refer to your enclosed resume.) If you are short on experience, mention extracurricular activities, examples of leadership, special projects that you have worked on, etc.

(2 Spaces)

**Third Paragraph.** In the closing paragraph, indicate your desire for a personal interview and your flexibility as to the time and place. You can also close the letter by saying that you will call them on a certain date to follow up on your resume. Or, state that you will be in the area on a certain date and would like to set up an interview. Also, close by stating that you would be glad to furnish any additional information. Thank them for their time and consideration.

(2 Spaces)

Sincerely,

(Signature)

(4 Spaces)

John A. Bowers

(2 Spaces)

Enclosure/s

## Unsolicited Cover Letter

123 Main Street  
Ada, Ohio 45830

October 30, 2001

Frank V. Short, Esq.  
Smith, Walker, Short & Gresham  
1639 South Grant Street  
Chicago, IL 60601

Dear Mr. Short:

I am a first year law student at Ohio Northern University with an undergraduate degree from Notre Dame in chemical engineering. My interest in working as a summer clerk with Smith, Walker, Short & Gresham is based on the strong correlation between the firm's practice in intellectual property and my educational background.

My immediate objectives are to develop my skills in the area of patent law and to increase my level of responsibility within a firm. Because of my part-time work experience in related areas and academic courses in the field, I feel that I would be a good fit as a summer clerk.

Enclosed is a copy of my resume for your review. I would welcome the opportunity to discuss a summer position with your firm. I will call you in a couple of weeks to see if we could schedule a convenient time to meet. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

(Signature)

John M. Jones

## Sample Cover Letter

123 Main Street  
Ada, Ohio 45810

October 5, 2001

John B. White  
Dykema Gossett  
400 Renaissance Center  
Detroit, MI 48243

Dear Mr. White:

Mr. Harold Smith recently informed me that your firm is seeking new entry level associates. As a third year law student at Ohio Northern University, I am interested in interviewing with an outstanding firm such as yours which specializes in patent law.

Last summer I was fortunate in obtaining extremely valuable legal experience while clerking for Thompson, Hine & Flory. Mr. Black recognized my willingness to work hard and put in long hours and granted me a great deal of responsibility in the three months that I worked for the firm. While in law school I have demonstrated leadership qualities through my involvement as president of our Student Bar Association.

Having grown up in Michigan, I am looking to return to the area to pursue my legal career. I realize the opportunities that this environment has to offer and am looking forward to taking advantage of those.

I have enclosed my resume so that you may review my professional experience and educational background. I will be in Detroit over our Thanksgiving break (November 23 - 27). I would welcome the opportunity to speak with you about employment with your firm at that time. I will call you the week of October 29 so that we can schedule a meeting. I look forward to talking with you.

Sincerely,

(Signature)

Susan A. Jones

Enclosure

## Sample Cover Letter to an Alum

123 Main Street  
Ada, Ohio 45810

November 5, 2001

James E. Smith  
Krembals, Foster & Millard  
50 W. Broad Street  
Columbus, OH 43215

Dear Mr. Smith:

Since you are a graduate of Ohio Northern University's Law College, it was recommended to me through the Office of Law Career Strategies that perhaps you might be looking to your alma mater as a possible source of law clerks for next summer. I am a second year law student at ONU and am looking to obtain valuable legal experience in a general practice firm such as yours.

I have enclosed my resume to provide for you an opportunity to review my legal education and background. During this second year of law school, I stand in the top ten percent of my class. In addition, I am active on the Moot Court Board of Advocates.

I am currently planning on residing this coming summer in my hometown of London, within close proximity of Columbus. This would enable me to work the extended amount of hours that a valuable legal experience might demand.

I will be in the area over the Thanksgiving break (November 23 - 27). I will call you the first part of December in the hopes that we might be able to arrange a convenient meeting to discuss the possibilities of summer employment with your firm.

Sincerely,

(Signature)

Charles E. Jones

Enclosure

Sandra Sullivan  
333 North Palm Drive, Apt. No. 205  
Beverly Hills, California 90210

January 10, 2002

Ursula Rathbone, Esq.  
U.S. Attorney's Office  
Central District of California  
312 North Spring Street  
Los Angeles, California 90012

Dear Ms. Rathbone:

I am writing to you to apply for the position as an Assistant U.S. Attorney. I am interested in the office because I would like to acquire trial experience.

Currently I am enrolled at Yale University Law School, where I serve as Note and Comment Editor of the Yale Law Review. I graduated with honors from Catholic University with a Bachelor of Science degree in Accounting.

Last summer, I worked for the Los Angeles office of White & Case. While I have received excellent training in their litigation department, I feel that an opportunity to further develop my trial experience would be beneficial. I believe that only within the U.S. Attorney's Office will I acquire the skills I am interested in developing.

Please keep this inquiry in strict confidence. Thank you for your consideration. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

(Signature)

Sandra Sullivan

SS/me

Enclosure

Sandra Sullivan  
1758 Whaler Road  
New Haven, Connecticut 06509

January 3, 2000

The Honorable Robert Smith, Associate Justice  
United States District Court for the Central District of California  
312 North Spring Street  
Los Angeles, California 90012

Re: Judicial Clerkship for 2001-2002 Term

Dear Judge Smith:

I am writing to you to apply for the position as your law clerk during the 1985-86 term. I would like to clerk for you because I enjoy writing and am interested in working in an environment where the interpretations of law are debated and decided.

As you will see from the enclosed resume, I am currently a third year law student at Yale University Law School. I serve as the Note and Comment Editor of the Yale Law Review and my article "The Constitutional Rights of the Homeless" is scheduled for publication in the Fall 2001 issue of the Review. I have enclosed a copy of my most recent draft of the article for your review and consideration. I have also enclosed a copy of my law school transcript.

While I am presently attending law school in Connecticut, I can fly into Los Angeles, where my parents reside, to interview at your convenience. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

(Signature)

Sandra Sullivan

SS/me

Enclosures

**Sample Cover Letter**

123 Main Street  
Ada, Ohio 45810

October 5, 2001

Susan B. Miller  
Procter & Gamble Co.  
11511 Reed Hartman Highway  
Cincinnati, Ohio 45241

Dear Ms. Miller:

In response to your recent Ohio Bar Association Report advertisement, I would appreciate your considering me for an associate position with your company. Your ad listed several qualifications for favorable consideration, and I feel I meet your requirements, as briefly outlined below:

1. Self-motivated - I have worked during the summers and part time during the school years to earn my own tuition. This, coupled with earned scholarships has enabled me to put myself through four years of undergraduate education, and three years of law school.

2. Excellent Communication Skills - As indicated on my resume, I was a semi-finalist in our Moot Court Oral Advocacy Competition. This, coupled with the book award in legal writing I received as a first year law student, is indicative of outstanding communication skills.

3. Ties to the local area - I grew up in Cincinnati, and still have family and friends in the area. Aware of the cultural advantages, and professional opportunities that can be found there, I know that I want to pursue my career in Cincinnati.

4. Strong desire for achievement and commitment - The recommendations from my law professors and attorneys for whom I clerked can quickly attest to my potential for success in the legal field through achievement and commitment.

The ability to work well with people, to have the drive and interest to accomplish the work, and several years of stable work experience make me uniquely qualified for this position.

I look forward to meeting with you personally to discuss the opportunity and how I may contribute to the ongoing success of your firm. Thank you.

Sincerely,

(Signature)

Linda K. Smith

Enclosure

The following is the correct way to type an envelope according to the U. S. Postal Service (All caps/no punctuation):

JOHN D SMITH  
123 MAIN STREET  
ADA OH 45810

PAUL J MILLARD ESQ  
KREMBALS FOSTER & MILLARD  
50 W BROAD STREET  
COLUMBUS OH 43215