

TELL YOUR STORY

*Cover Letters, Resumes,
References & Thank-you notes*

Bluffton University Center for Career & Vocation

Just inside the main doors of Musselman Library
Monday—Thursday 9am—6pm; Friday 9am—2pm
Evenings and weekends by appointment

419-358-3030 | career@bluffton.edu



On Facebook search “Bluffton CCV”



On Twitter @BlufftonCCV



Search *Shari Ayers* and *Britnie Loch* to connect with us on LinkedIn

Find the sustainable you!

Best Practices for Cover Letters

| PURPOSE | EDITING & REVIEWING |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Much like your résumé, the purpose of the cover letter is to get an interview. • The cover letter should accompany and introduce your résumé. It should expand on, but not repeat, items in your résumé. Some items are better suited to your cover letter. • Use this space to demonstrate knowledge of the employer and the position. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have one or more trusted and capable individuals read your final version • Ideally, let your cover letter “rest” for a day and then return to it to see if you have done the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduced, but not repeated, your résumé • Written (or at least tweaked) a new cover letter for <u>each</u> distinct position or open inquiry • Written for the reader • Focused on the job description and/or the organization’s mission and your fit with it • Highlighted specific experiences, projects, and applicable skills • Focused on what sets you apart • Been honest • Shown enthusiasm, passion, and energy • Made sure that there are no spelling or grammar errors (absolutely none) |
| STYLE & FORMAT | SECTIONS |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The cover letter should match your résumé in style and format. • One sheet, one side is the preferred length. • Use conventional business letter formatting: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⇒ Your contact information/address (may be in a header to match résumé) ⇒ Date ⇒ Hiring manager’s name and address (Be as specific as possible. If the name is not known, use simply “Human Resources Director” or “Hiring Manager.”) ⇒ Position Identification (example ... RE: Entry Level Accounting Position) ⇒ Salutation (Again, be as specific as possible. If not known, lean toward “Dear Hiring Manager” rather than “To Whom it May Concern.” Never, ever, ever use “Dear Sir.”) ⇒ Body/content (more about this below) ⇒ Closing and signature • Match the standards of your résumé: typically 1” margins, easy-to-read fonts (arial, times new roman, etc) in 11-point type. • You are S.T.A.R.-ing in your own life’s story. Think about describing your impact by describing the: Situation, Task, Action, and Results. How have you gone “above and beyond” and how might that experience | <p>Typically three or four paragraphs is best. In general, think about these four areas –</p> <p><u>Paragraph 1: Why you are writing</u> Grab the reader’s attention. Demonstrate enthusiasm for the opportunity right from the beginning. Describe how and where you learned of the opening. Three or four sentences is usually sufficient.</p> <p><u>Paragraph 2: What you have done</u> Reference your degree and your most relevant experience. Take the time to describe one or two projects or experiences in some detail. This is the place to hint at what an interview with you will be like (make sure they are left wanting to hear more). Talk about connections between your background and the position. Use some of those key words you highlighted in your search. Write for the reader – what would be important for you to read if you were the HR manager?</p> <p><u>Paragraph 3: What you like about the company</u> Build on the previous paragraph. Make it clear you have done your research regarding the company and its mission. Ideally, do this without substantive quotations from the web site. This is your opportunity to highlight your fit in the organizational culture.</p> <p><u>Paragraph 4: What you hope will happen next</u> Thank the reader for his or her time. Indicate your desire for a follow-up conversation and interview. Restate your interest and enthusiasm for the position. You might want to restate your contact information and indicate that you look forward to following up with them about the opportunity. (Note: If you say you will follow up next week, mark it on a calendar – you don’t want to forget this).</p> |

SAMPLE

CHRIS JACKSON

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Bluffton University, 1 University Dr. Bluffton, OH 45817
123-456-7890 • chrisjackson@bluffton.edu

October 22, 2015

ABC Company
Attn: Bob Jones, HR Manager
4321 Another Rd.
Somewhere, OH 44444

Re: Office Manager Opening

Dear Mr. Jones,

Please find enclosed my resume in application for the Office Manager position recently advertised in The Daily News. I was extremely excited to see this opening and I think my experience and personality would be a great fit for this position and your company.

As my resume shows, I have a great deal of experience in customer service oriented positions and my recently obtained degree in Business Administration and Communications from Bluffton University helped me to build on those skills even further. I gained many skills from my positions at Smith Company and ABC Organization. In both positions I supervised teams and managed office functions while serving customers.

In addition to having the skills and experience necessary to successfully fill this position, I am eager to be considered for this role because I know the great impact ABC Company has had on the local communities and I would enjoy being part of that process and impact. I have also had the opportunity to know multiple people with experience at ABC Company, specifically Amy Brown and Mark Black, who have always spoken very highly of the company and the opportunities afforded to them as employees.

In closing, thank you for taking time to review my resume. I look forward to an opportunity to meet with you in person to further discuss how my skills could fit your needs in this position. If you find that you are in need of any additional information to complete my application, please do not hesitate to contact me at any time.

Best Regards,

Chris Jackson

Chris Jackson

Enclosure: Resume & References

Some final thoughts....

- Submitting applications
 - ⇒ If submitting electronically, use pdf unless requested otherwise
 - ⇒ If submitting in person or by mail, use simple résumé paper. The Center for Career & Vocation has a limited supply of résumé paper for student use. Typically, we can provide you with 10 or so copies of your résumé and cover letter. For larger projects, check an office supply store
 - ⇒ Use a cover letter any time you are not handing your resume directly to someone
- If color is used on your documents, be sure to print out a black and white version to make sure everything is readable in gray tones
- If you struggle with *Highlighted Skills*, consider these:
 - ⇒ What does a teacher who knows you well think when they see your name on a class list?
“Oh Chris Jackson.... He always contributes to class discussion and gets everyone involved”
Possible Highlighted Skill: “Skilled at facilitating group conversations and soliciting participation”
 - ⇒ What does a former coach think when they see your name on a team roster?
“Chris Jackson... I’ve hardly seen a more dedicated player”
Possible Highlighted Skill: “Incredible work ethic with dedication to excellent performance”
 - ⇒ What does a supervisor think when they see your name on the shift schedule?
“Chris Jackson... I never have to check up on him. He’s great with the customers”
Possible Highlighted Skill: “Exceptional customer service skills and ability to self-supervise”
- If you struggle with resume bullet points:
 - ⇒ Think past just the tasks of the job and consider outcomes of your work
(*“Cleaned restrooms and emptied trashes”* vs. *“Maintained safe and clean environment to welcome visitors”*)
 - ⇒ What was the bigger picture to which you contributed
 - ⇒ Think transferrable skills—Did you...
 - * Train or supervise others?
 - * Suggest Improvements to processes?
 - * Manage major programs or projects?
 - * Maintain records or documentation?
 - * Work independently or self-supervise?