Business Correspondence

The letters you write to employers will be effective if they contain appropriate information and are compelling to your reader. The cover letter and the thank you letter are the two main types of correspondence you will use. However, please note that you will correspond with employers in many other, less formal, ways (email, telephone, skype, etc.)

This section gives you an overview of these styles; however, we suggest that you gather additional information by reading publications on the subject and by meeting with Jake Sneva or Molly deRoos. In particular, we recommend Cover Letters that Knock ‘Em Dead, by Martin Yate (www.knockemdead.com). Yate’s book addresses style, tone, sentence structure, and offers many good letter samples including cover, thank you, acceptance, and networking letters.

Cover Letters

The cover letter functions as an extension of your resume and reflects your knowledge of a specific employer’s needs. It should also demonstrate that you are able to communicate clearly and concisely, that you are sincerely interested in this particular job, and that you are well-suited for the position.

Because all employers’ needs are different, you will need to write a unique cover letter carefully tailored to each individual employer. Always include a cover letter with your resume when formally applying for a position.

A cover letter typically consists of three parts:

1. Introduction: Capture the employer’s interest! Identify the position for which you are applying, tell how you found information about the job, and connect how your background, interests and experiences fit that particular opening.

2. Middle paragraph(s): Show that you understand the nature of the position and explain how your qualifications relate to it. Include 3-5 examples of skills or qualities that make you a particularly strong candidate. These can be skills obtained through work, courses, or extra-curricular activities.

3. Closing: Since your objective in sending a cover letter and resume is to secure an interview, let the employer know that you are available for an interview at their convenience. Reiterate your interest in the position and how your skill set will allow you to be successful in the position. Leave the employer with something positive to remember about you.
Writing a clear, direct, and persuasive letter is not easy. Avoid these basic blatant errors:

- Misspellings: do not rely on spellcheckers, since they will not correct homonyms or words spelled correctly but misused.
- Copy-and-paste problems: do not tell Fairmont how well-suited you are for Starwood.
- Misinformation: do not express interest in a division that does not exist.
- Insincerity: avoid clichés, “cookie cutter” language, extreme expressions.
- Long-windedness: keep your letter short and to the point.

Thank You Letters

- It is acceptable to send an email to thank your interviewer(s).
- Convey your appreciation for the time the employer spent in the interview.
- Briefly restate your interest and qualifications.
- Strengthen your candidacy with additional, relevant information.
- Indicate eagerness for a positive response.

General Guidelines for All Letters of Correspondence

- Use simple, direct language, and correct grammar. Keep your sentences short, punchy, and active.
- A good letter will communicate your potential contributions rather than your current needs.
- Send all correspondence to an individual. Do not address the letter to “Dear Sir/Madam,” “To Whom it May Concern,” or to a title. If you need to, call the company to get the correct name and spelling (and gender) of the relevant person.
- Send a hand-written note on tasteful stationery in some special cases.
- Make your letter flawless.
- Keep your letter to a single page.
- Use standard business letter format. The letter should be centered on the page with equal margins on the sides.
- For letters submitted electronically, keep the formatting simple.
- For letters sent by mail or hand-delivered, use quality bond paper, 8 1/2” x 11”, either white or a color matched to your resume.
- Sign each letter above your typed name. Don’t forget to sign your letter.
- Keep a copy of all correspondence for future reference.
- Check file/names before attaching to an e-mail (students often use a company name in the filename, edit the letter, and never update the filename to reflect the newly targeted company).
SAMPLE COVER LETTER:

Daisy May  
3500 Warren Rd. Apt. 2  
Ithaca, NY  14850  
October 20, 2008

Craig Richey  
Director of Human Resources  
Thomas Cuisine Management  
640 East Franklin Road  
Meridian, ID  83642

Dear Mr. Richey:

I am a Master of Management in Hospitality candidate in the School of Hotel Administration at Cornell University with a concentration in marketing. I’m interested in the MIT Program posted on Cornell’s CCNET. With my previous operations experience in restaurant management and my efforts to build on my customer experience and communications skills at Cornell, the MIT Program is a great way for me to start with your Thomas Cuisine Management. Already adept at training, managing a team, and working with guests and employees in high-intensity environments, I would quickly prove to be an asset to your team. I am also looking to relocate to the Boise area.

I am particularly interested in Thomas Cuisine Management because of the firm’s focus on finding individual solutions for each client. My experience at Vin Rouge gave me the opportunity to find solutions for our guests every day. One of our older, regular guests asked for lemon sorbet each time he visited our restaurant despite knowing that we could not offer sorbets due to lack of freezer availability. When he booked a brunch reservation for his granddaughter’s baptism, I went to a nearby grocery store and purchased lemon sorbet to make the day even more special for this proud grandpa.

I have also found individual solutions for the back of the house. When several of our team members were unhappy and considering leaving Vin Rouge, instead of taking an impersonal, one-size-fits-all approach, I spoke with the team members individually about their concerns and brought those concerns to the executive team. As a result, the restaurant adapted to address the team’s anxieties and kept these valuable human assets.

I welcome the opportunity for an interview either in person or over the phone. I will be in the Boise area for the weekend of Oct. 31-Nov. 2 and again Dec. 27-Jan. 14. I will contact your office to see if a meeting can be arranged during this time. In the meantime, if you need to contact me, I can be reached at: dsm@gmail.com , (919) 623-3456, or (607) 319-5867. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Daisy May