

# Cover Letters & More Handbook

Information provided by:

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# COVER LETTERS

## GETTING STARTED

The examples of professional correspondence provided in this handout should be used as just **samples**. The Career Development Center is here to help you craft your original business correspondence that highlights **your unique writing style**. Just like your resume, **there are no straight cut rules** about what to write in a letter. Some **guidelines are important to consider**, such as formatting for a cover letter, salutations and follow up procedures. Additionally, **all correspondence should be tailored** to each individual employer.

### The Basics:

- The purpose of a cover letter, like a resume, is to make a prospective employer want to interview you
- A cover letter should look to answer the following three questions:
  - **Can you do the job?** (speaks to *experiences/qualifications*)
  - **Will you do the job?** (speaks to *interest/enthusiasm*)
  - **Will you be a good fit?** (speaks to *alignment* with organization *culture*)
- Keep the letter brief: one page, 3-4 paragraphs

Below is a general format to follow:

**First paragraph:** Here's your chance to grab the *reader's attention*. Be sure to identify the position and organization to which you are applying. Mention how you heard about the position. If a faculty member or current employee recommended you for the position, include that in your cover letter.

**Second paragraph:** Speak to *why you are applying* to the position as well as the organization. This should be more than just seeking a job or a stepping stone to prepare you for your next job. If you have experience at the organization, mention why you want to continue working for their organization. Do your *research* to see if they've been in the news for positive reasons. Also, look to see their mission, values, and reputation and speak to how you would be a good fit as a colleague and employee.

**Third paragraph:** Discuss some special *skills, attributes, or experiences* that make you the right candidate and worthy of consideration by the employer. Highlight key accomplishments from your resume and describe how your experiences and skills will meet the organization's needs. Be specific!

**Last paragraph:** *Reiterates your eagerness* to pursue this position. Thank the reader for their time and provide your contact information in-text for them to follow up with you if they require additional information or are looking to set up an interview.

### Tips:

- Include the name of the hiring manager whenever possible
  - Get in contact with the company to inquire about the correct person in which to address your documents
- Remove phrases like "I believe" and "I feel" so you sound confident:
  - "I feel that my experience is valuable because..." vs. "*My experience is valuable because...*"
  - "I believe I am a strong leader..." vs. "*I demonstrated leadership skills in 'X' experience...*"
- **Be positive.** Avoid phrases like "While I have no experience in the field..." or "Although I am not a strong student..." Emphasize your positive qualities and highlight your accomplishments!

## COVER LETTER OUTLINE

Here's a table to help you organize the information you've gathered to incorporate into your cover letter.

	Information found from research	How can it be addressed in Cover Letter?
Job Description		
Buzzwords from Job Description		
Traits/Experience Desired by Organization		
Mission/Values of Organization		
Additional Research on Organization		
Information learned from Network		

## Cover Letter Sample

NOTE: Be sure to write your cover letter using your own words. Copying even a few words or a sentence from this sample is considered *plagiarism*. Contact us if you have questions.

Your Name  
Your Street Address  
City, State Zip

January 17, 20\_\_

Full name of HR/Hiring Manager [if known]  
Organization Name  
Street Address  
City, State Zip

Dear [enter full name]:

After speaking with Dr. Smith at Thomas Jefferson University's job fair last week, she suggested that I submit my application for the Occupational Therapist position listed on [enter organization]'s Human Resources website. Having completed my clinical fieldwork with a diverse patient population and participating in a wide array of leadership programming during my time at Thomas Jefferson University, I know that I can best serve your patient population as well as be a successful member of the [enter organization] team.

When speaking with Dr. Smith, she informed how your organization prides itself on the individual and customized care you provide each patient as well as innovative thinking. In my role at the Sunshine facility, I worked one-on-one with each patient to define their individual goals, and I evaluated their progress through weekly check-ins. I successfully managed treatment for up to five patients each day, ensuring proper documentation was completed in a timely manner. Additionally, I developed a new organization system that increased the efficiency of our documentation process by 35%.

The position you outlined would also allow me to contribute my clinical education, research skills, and volunteer experience I have gained as an Occupational Therapy student at Jefferson. My active leadership and service roles, including my participation in Leadership LIVE, have also helped me develop strong interpersonal and communication skills. As a Career Ambassador for the Career Development Center, I've been able to educate a diverse group of my peers to develop their own career management skills. In this role, I've customized my approach to each student appointment, a trait that I look forward to continuing in a role as an Occupational Therapist.

Thank you for your time and consideration regarding the Occupational Therapist position. Feel free to contact me anytime at [enter phone number], or [enter e-mail address] if you have any additional questions. Thank you again for your time, and I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,  
[4 spaces if mailed or faxed, 2 spaces if e-mailed]  
[Handwrite signature only if mailing or faxing]

Your Typed Name [include for all formats- mailing, faxing or e-mailing]

# THANK YOU LETTERS

Although often overlooked, thank you notes are just as essential as any other part of the interview. Thank you letters are an additional opportunity to leave a favorable impact on the interviewers. Thank you notes are most effective if *written within 24-48 hours* of the interview.

## Thank You Letter FAQs

- **Should I send an email or handwritten letter?** – Consider the *amount of time* the company will be taking to make their decisions. If there will be a short turn around, sending an email might be the best option. If the interview process will continue for a few weeks, a handwritten note might be better. The most important thing to remember is to *write and send a note!*
- **Who gets a thank you letter?** – The answer is *everyone* that interviewed you. The content of your letter might not vary too much per person; however, anyone who took the time to interview you should receive a *personalized* thank you letter.
- **How do I tailor my letter to each person?** – Writing personal thank you letters to each interviewer is not as difficult as it may seem. Be sure to *take notes*, whether during the interview or after the interview, to keep track of each detail and topic you discussed. Also, *ask for business cards* before you leave. This will provide you the proper spelling of each person's name as well as their contact information to follow up and address your letters!

## Thank You Letter (E-mail) Sample Format

Your Street Address  
City, State Zip

January 17, 20\_\_

Full name  
Hiring Manager  
Facility Name  
Street Address  
City, State Zip

Dear [enter full name]:

Express your appreciation. Individualize this letter; employers will sense if you are using a template for a thank you letter.

Refer to something that was discussed during the interview. Reiterate your interest in the position/organization.

Thank them again for their time, and mention your interest in speaking with them again in the future. Here is a good place to provide any other information that wasn't previously given, or to ask a question (for example, if you aren't sure about the time frame for future interviews).

Sincerely,  
[4 spaces if mailed or faxed, 2 spaces if e-mailed]  
[Handwrite signature if mailing or faxing]

Your Typed Name [include for all formats- mailing, faxing or e-mailing]

# WITHDRAWAL LETTERS

As a job seeker, you must follow ethical guidelines as part of your job search. One important ethical guideline is to withdraw from interviewing when your job search is completed.

## Withdrawal Letter FAQs

- **Is it really necessary to send a withdrawal letter?** – *YES*, it is absolutely necessary to follow up with an employer. Hiring managers will appreciate you extending the professional courtesy to inform them you are no longer interested. Also, you never know if your career paths will meet again when considering future positions!
- **How should I inform the employer?** – Our suggestion is to get in contact with them over the *phone* as well as in *writing/e-mail*. Do NOT inform them about your decision over a voicemail. Be sure to remain *professional and courteous* during your encounters with the employer as well as when informing others of your decision, maintaining a positive reputation will continue to support you throughout your career.
- **What should I write in the letter?** – Be sure to *thank the employer* for the offer/interview/time. Inform them that it was a difficult decision, and *extend your well wishes* during the remainder of their search. Again, staying *positive and professional* can benefit you throughout your career. You never know if you'll end up working alongside the employer/hiring manager in the future.
- **Should I tell them why I'm withdrawing?** – This answer is completely *up to you*. You are *not required* to give them a specific answer. However, if they ask follow up questions, then you can answer them if you feel comfortable. If you have any questions contact our office!

## Withdrawal Letter Sample

Your Street Address  
City, State Zip

January 17, 20\_\_

Full Name  
Hiring Manager  
Hospital Name  
Street Address  
City, State Zip

Dear [enter full name]:

Let them know that you are thankful for the offer/opportunity to interview. Concisely state your decision with a brief explanation. (i.e. "I am writing to inform you that I am withdrawing my application for the [job title] at [enter organization], as I have decided to accept another offer of employment. It was a difficult decision for me to make as I enjoyed meeting with you. Thank you so much for your time throughout the interview process.")

End on a positive note. Remember, you will most likely work with or encounter this organization again!

Sincerely,  
[4 spaces if mailed or faxed, 2 spaces if e-mailed]  
[Handwrite signature if mailing or faxing]

Your Typed Name [include for all formats- mailing, faxing or e-mailing]

# REQUESTING INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEWS

Requesting an informational interview might not seem necessary or a natural thing to do. With practice and guidance from our office, you can learn the techniques to help clarify your career goals and get your foot in the door before you graduate.

## Information Interview FAQs

- **What's the point of asking for an informational interview?** – Informational interviews are a way to *develop an understanding* of a specific *career field or organization*. They can also lead to you *expanding your network*, which can be beneficial during your job search and throughout your career.
- **What is an informational interview?** – An informational interview is a conversation with a contact (who you may or may not know) to learn about their career, industry, and/or employer.
- **Should I ask for a job/internship opportunity?** – *NO!* Rather than asking for a job, ask for information about the employer, the field, and general advice. The goal is to create a valuable relationship that may lead to a referral, contact, mentor, or job.

## Methods of Contact:

- **LinkedIn** – Search for individuals using the *Alumni tab*, or the main search bar. You may find recent graduates with similar interests or established alumni in your career field of interest. Message individuals through a private message, the Jefferson Career Center Network, or contact them through email.
- **Email** – You might identify the contacts you wish to have an informational interview with through LinkedIn or another source, but ultimately message them using email. Be brief, use a *specific subject header*, and keep the language formal. Make sure to *identify how you're connected* and/or got their information (through a friend, colleague, LinkedIn, website, etc).

## Informational Interview Request Sample

*Example:*

Good afternoon Ms. Jones,

I came across your profile on LinkedIn and noticed we have a few things in common including our time at TJU, such as Leadership Live and the Health Mentors Program, as well as a shared interest in nursing. I had a few questions about the nursing field and your experiences at Sunshine Hospital. Would you have any time in the next few weeks to speak with me briefly over the phone or in person? As a recent graduate, I would love to hear about your experiences and any advice you wish to share. Thank you so much.

Sincerely,  
Jane Smith