

PREPARING EFFECTIVE CORRESPONDENCE

Cover Letter

Purpose

A cover letter is your opportunity to tell the employer why you are interested in them and why they should hire you. It should highlight credentials and background specific to that employer. Each cover letter should be tailored to the individual employer. If you are responding to a job posting, make sure that your letter details how your background and experience meets the hiring criteria mentioned in the posting. Avoid using form letters, except for clerkship applications. However, even when using form letters for clerkship applications, keep in mind that a letter to a judge sitting in the Civil Part may not be appropriate for a judge sitting in the Family Part. Finally, remember that a cover letter also is an example of your writing abilities. Therefore, it is imperative that you spend ample time crafting your letter and that your letter has been proofread by you and at least two other people.

Format

A cover letter should be written in a general business letter style and printed on bond paper that matches your resume paper. A one page cover letter should be sufficient for almost any job.

Content

A cover letter should include the following sections: Your Address, the Employer's Address, Salutation, Introduction, Body, Concluding paragraph, and Closing.

- **Address**

Your address: Include your address and the current date at the right-hand side of the paper.

217 North Fifth Street
Camden, NJ 08102

August 23, 2004

Employer's address: Include the name and title of the person to whom you are sending the letter. Your cover letter should always be addressed to a specific individual, unless the employer specifically instructs you to apply to a title (e.g., "Hiring Coordinator", "Hiring Partner") or you are responding to a blind ad. Otherwise, you should never write to a title without having a name to go along with it. If you do not know the name of the specific individual, call the firm and ask. The employer's address should be placed at the left-hand side of the paper.

Jane Jones, Esq. (or John Jones, Esq.)
Jones & Jones, LLP
210 Haddon Avenue
Haddonfield, NJ 08033

- **Salutation**
Use “Dear” and address the person formally by using their last name. Never use “Mrs.” for a female addressee. Instead always use “Ms.”

Dear Ms. Jones (or Mr. Jones):

- **Introduction**
The introductory paragraph should clearly state: who you are, why you are writing, and, if you are applying for a specific position, the position you are applying for along with how you learned of the position. Finally, you may want to take the opportunity to discuss your reason for wanting to work in that particular area if your geographic ties are not evident from your resume.
- **Body**
The Body will typically be one or two paragraphs and should reflect your unique abilities and qualifications. It should be tailored to the employer and specific job or practice group. Use the body to explain the relationship between the employer’s work and your experience or career interests. Explain why you are interested in that particular employer and why that employer should be interested in you. Address any requirements listed in the job posting. Show how your past experiences or accomplishments are relevant to successful performance on the job. Give examples that demonstrate your abilities and accomplishments. DO NOT tell them how great this job would be for you, tell them how great you would be for the job.
- **Conclusion**
Thank the employer for their consideration and restate your interest in that employer. If you are applying to an employer outside of the area, and you will be in that area in the near future, indicate when you will be available for an interview.
- **Closing**
The closing should be aligned with your address. Use “Respectfully” if you are writing to a judge, use “Sincerely” or “Very truly yours” for everyone else.

After typing your name in the closing, skip two spaces and type “Enclosure” (or “Enc.” or “Encl.”) at the left-hand side of the page, if only your resume accompanies the cover letter. Type “Enclosures” if other documents are enclosed as well.