CONTACT EMPLOYERS

Every résumé requires an introduction—an explanation for why it was sent. An effective cover letter introduces your résumé, summarizes your immediate career goals, and is used for many reasons:

- Respond to specific job postings for direct hire
- Request an interview invitation
- Inquire about opportunities
- Follow-up an interview to show appreciation

FORM LETTERS

Never send a form letter to employers. This might seem like an easy and quick way to contact hundreds of employers with your résumé. Candidates erroneously use this approach—often called the “shotgun” approach—to claim they have done an “exhaustive” job search, sending résumés to hundreds of employers and receiving no responses. Upon this premise, they conclude that there are no jobs out there, and they blame the bad economy or others for their joblessness. How often have you heard, “I’ve sent out 400 résumés and posted a résumé on every major job board, but no one is getting back to me. There are no jobs.” ECS would never condone this as even an “outlier” strategy for conducting an effective job search.

TRADITIONAL COVER LETTER FORMAT

Using form letters is a waste of your time, so create a targeted list of employers. Then develop letters or emails specifically for each employer. Each communication will include these basic elements:

Introduction
Clearly and simply state why you are writing to the employer. It is crucial for you to make it clear that you deserve further consideration. If appropriate, identify the person, by name, who suggested you contact the employer. This use of connecting is particularly effective.

Body
Emphasize the match between your qualifications and the employer’s needs. Do not simply repeat your résumé but expand upon 1 or 2 qualifications that fit the specific position for which you are applying. Describe how your background has prepared you as a “good match” for the ongoing and/ or future needs of that specific employer.

Closing
Request employer action (i.e., an interview or a response for a site visit) at the employer’s earliest convenience. Indicate the next step you will take, such as “I will contact you during the week of October 2 to follow up on this request.” Close with a goodwill/ appreciation statement: “I look forward to meeting with you. Thank you for your time and consideration.”

QUICK TIPS

Every résumé requires an introduction or explanation for why it was sent. Most likely, you will email your “cover letter” as the body of the email and you will attach your résumé.

TONE AND TIMING

Professional tone
While the message content is important, the tone is equally important. Be professional. Address the message to Mr., Ms. or Dr. XXX. It is rarely acceptable to use first names in a business salutation. Avoid using slang and contractions (“I’ve” and “you’ll”). Be courteous and respectful.

Effective timing
Traditionally, employers recruit new college hires on campus in early fall and early spring, but new market needs and budgets affect timing.

EMAIL REMINDERS FOR JOB SEEKERS

In most cases, it is acceptable to communicate with employers by email. This includes the initial contact, follow-ups after an interview, and thank you’s. Email can be very effective (i.e., quick)—or disastrous—if sent to the wrong person, written too informally, conveying a negative message, or containing spelling or grammatical errors. Use strictly formal business communication tones when communicating with an employer by email.
BUSINESS EMAIL ETIQUETTE

- The biggest mistake students make in using email for their job search is treating it too casually. This is business! Not social.
- Be professional. Edit your message and double check the address prior to selecting the “send” button.
- Don’t be sloppy. This isn’t texting. You are not asking someone for a date or gathering a group to study or hang out. You are looking for a job.
- What emotion does your email convey? What are the implications and perceptions? Email does not project emotions as well as face-to-face or even phone conversations. It lacks vocal inflection, gestures, and a shared environment. It also does not communicate normal cues such as dress, diction or dialect. The reader will make assumptions based on your name, email address and facility with the language. You need to be meticulous. Write in a precise, clear manner.
- Make everything completely clear and unambiguous. Use perfect spelling, eloquent words and correct grammar. Don’t be conversational. Do not use funny, cute or non-professional email addresses.
- Sarcasm and humor are particularly dangerous to use in email.
- Choose your words very carefully. Sadly, a large number of people suffer mishaps because they did not understand how to adjust their communication styles to the medium of email.

QUICK TIPS

- Email business communication is MUCH different than personal email communication. Re-read this statement. Slow down and think of what you are doing.
- Do not hit the “send” button! Review and spell check. Check the tone for professionalism. This is not a social, how ya’ doin? type of email!

SAMPLE LETTERS AND EMAILS

The following pages contain cover letter and email text samples for you to reference when contacting potential employers during all aspects of your job search.

- Business letter format
- Letter of application
- Career fair follow-up
- Interview thank you and follow-up
- First and second follow-up emails
- Accepting a job offer
- Rejecting a job offer

Some things to note:

- Always attach a résumé—perhaps a revised version, if you have made changes. If requested, you also may attach a list of your references.
- Attach your résumé as a PDF file or a lower MS Word document version to reduce problems in opening the attachment.
August 29, 20XX

Ms. Sara Rooney Manager
GIM Medical Systems 98 GIM Building
Arlington Heights, IL  64039

Dear Ms. Rooney:

On the recommendation of UW–Madison Professor Zhang Wei, I am inquiring about research-oriented engineering opportunities within GIM. I will complete my PhD in electrical engineering in August 20XX and have an excellent academic record and solid employment experience in both industry and academia.

My research initiatives in optimal sensors and signal-processing algorithms for apnea monitors match the research of your recently established facility in Arlington Heights. While at the regional IEEE conference in Chicago last month, I presented a paper on this topic and received positive feedback from a number of colleagues, including Mr. James Smith, a representative of GIM. My major area of study at UW–Madison has been biomedical engineering. Combining my minor in computer science and my work experiences, I feel I can make significant contributions to GIM.

My résumé is enclosed for your review. I would like to arrange an interview with you at your earliest convenience.

I will follow up this letter with a phone call on November 2, in the hope of arranging an interview. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

[Your Signature]

Sneha Muherjee

Enclosure: Résumé

FOR HARD-COPY LETTERS:

• 1” side margins
• Use 10–12 pt. font size
• Use simple font styles
• Sign the letter if mailing
• Emailed cover letters are appropriate for your job search
• Professional communication rules apply for both paper letters and email communication
LETTER OF APPLICATION

Harris Corporation came to my attention as I researched firms specializing in small engine design (more detail about your background and the company's area of research/manufacturing/services). I am seeking a co-op position as a design engineer and am available for up to three co-op work terms.

Currently, I am a junior in mechanical engineering at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. My particular interests are in the area of small engine design and testing. I have pursued my interest in small engines in a variety of ways, both on and off campus (more details here). While at UW-Madison, I have successfully completed required and elective mechanical engineering courses, including (include some courses taken or currently enrolled in). In addition, I have worked 10-15 hours per week while maintaining a strong GPA. To develop my communication and leadership skills, I have actively sought key positions in engineering student organizations on campus.

Some highlights of my experiences and preparation are:
- Career Connection volunteer
- ASME member
- Strong academic background: GPA 3.2/4.0
- Avid lifelong interest in rebuilding and maintaining small engines

I would like the opportunity to talk with you about my qualifications as they relate to your engineering needs. I will contact you in two weeks with the hope of arranging an interview with you at your earliest convenience. Thank you for your time and consideration. I look forward to meeting with you.

CAREER FAIR FOLLOW-UP

It was a pleasure meeting you at the engineering career fair on the campus of the University of Wisconsin-Madison. We discussed the possibility of interviewing when you returned to campus on October 12. Please know that I am very interested in working in your Phoenix manufacturing facility and being a part of your newly developed engineering training program.

As you may recall, I have just completed a 2-term co-op experience with Plexus in Neenah, Wisconsin, and look forward to seeking opportunities for full-time employment.

I hope to hear from you soon regarding my invited status for campus interview sign-up. If you have any questions regarding my qualifications, please contact me. My résumé is attached for your review. Thank you for your time and consideration.