

Cover Letters & Thank-You Notes

Well Written Letters & Notes = Critical Communication

Do I need to send a cover letter with my resume? Is writing a thank you note necessary—I thanked them in person?

Cover Letters—YES! Unless the instructions literally say—*No Cover Letters*—it is always a good idea to include a cover letter as it serves to introduce your resume and gives you the opportunity to direct your reader's attention to specific areas of your background.

Thank You Notes—YES! A genuine note of thanks to anyone you've connected with or who has helped you in some way leaves a lasting impression and helps you build a solid reputation as a professional person. Send notes after interviews, meeting someone at a career fair or chatting with someone over coffee.

Remember—Any written correspondence is a writing sample. Always put your best work forward!

Cover Letters: Getting Started

1. What do you know about this organization and are you connected? *Ex. This large furniture manufacturing company has core values related to community service. Doug Evans suggested I apply for the internal communications role based on our work together at company xyz.*

Your Turn: Identify what you know and admire about the organization. (Why are you applying?) Include any connections you may have:

2. Read through the job posting and identify the primary functions of the role. *Ex. This role appears to be 80% internal communications and requires strong technical skills related to digital marketing.*

Your Turn: Try summarizing the primary functions of the job for which you are applying:

3. Based on why you are applying and what you believe the heart of the role is, identify what you want them to know about you. *Ex. I am an adaptable communicator who values community.*

YOUR TURN: Name one or two facts you want them to know about you:

4. Identify evidence that this fact is true—what have you accomplished as a result of this fact? *Ex. Writing for the employee newsletter was a highlight of my internship. After two editions, I was informed that a valuable segment of our audience was not represented in our stories—the night shift. Often overlooked, I arranged to work afterhours for a week so I could meet the shift, understand their story, and begin weaving them into the fabric of our newsletter. It was well-received and the newsletter was recognized at a national conference for innovation in internal health communications.*

YOUR TURN:

5. Why do these accomplishments matter to your audience? Tie your accomplishments back to their needs. *Ex. Based on early conversations with your recruiter, I am excited by the community your organization has created but I know after this experience at the hospital, I will find myself looking through a new lens for stories I can discover in your community. I cannot wait to tell them.*

YOUR TURN:

6. Believe it or not, your cover letter is practically written—identifying why you are applying, understanding what you are applying for, and confidently knowing you can connect your experiences to their needs through a well written example is the tough stuff.

NEXT STEPS:

- Refer to the cover letter format found in the Resume and Cover Letter Guide or on our website: [https://www.gvsu.edu/cms4/asset/A5A7D4FD-936E-4562-8EC79EFCECAC7F3B/cover_letter\(2\).pdf](https://www.gvsu.edu/cms4/asset/A5A7D4FD-936E-4562-8EC79EFCECAC7F3B/cover_letter(2).pdf)
- Address your cover letter to a specific individual—if you can't find whom that is, take initiative and call! (*I am applying for your position and wondering whom to address the materials to.*)
- Start drafting and revising.
 - Read sections out loud to see how they sound.
 - Be sure every paragraph doesn't start with the same word.
 - Count the number of sentences that start with "I" and rewrite as many as you can.
 - Be sure you have a call to action—*Ex. I look forward to speaking with you soon.*
 - Be sure you thank them for their time and consideration.
 - Ask at least 3 people to proofread—feel free to write your letter in CareerLab—our advisors are always happy to provide feedback on content and read for errors.

Thank You Notes: Getting Started

A thank you note communicates not only your appreciation for the recent interaction you had with another person, but also that you are willing to act on your appreciation after reflection—a powerful message to send whether it is an email or handwritten. Follow these small steps to make a big impression.

1. Who are you writing to? *Ex. Dear Mr. Farley:*

YOUR TURN:

2. What are you thanking them for? *Ex. What a relief to meet you at the Career Fair—thank you for noticing I was nervous while waiting in line.*

YOUR TURN:

3. Add a specific detail about why this was impactful. *Ex. Looking around, I thought it was so obvious that I was a first-year student. It was reassuring when you said that employers think that is great initiative but I truly relaxed when you introduced me to the recruiter and helped me start a professional conversation. I left Career Fair feeling excited—I couldn't wait to tell my roommate who said I shouldn't go.*

YOUR TURN:

4. Write a looking forward statement. *Ex. Next time I attend a fair, I will still be nervous but also excited. I look forward to seeing you there.*

YOUR TURN:

5. Reiterate your thanks. *Ex. Thank you Mr. Farley, I couldn't have done that without you.*

YOUR TURN:

6. Proof-read, sign and send.

Tip: Keep a box of thank you cards ready so you can follow up with someone ASAP
