



Cover Letters & Other Job-Search Correspondence

INTRODUCTION

Throughout the course of your job search, you will be in constant contact with prospective employers. You will be evaluated on your ability to present yourself as a good communicator who is capable of contributing your skills to an employing organization.

Presenting yourself effectively “on paper” is an important and ongoing process during the job search. While this is accomplished in part with a well-written resume, a variety of correspondence is also necessary in virtually all job-search campaigns. Whether you are asking for an interview or accepting a job offer, appropriate and effective correspondence will significantly enhance your likelihood of success.

Cover letters are similar in purpose to resumes: they are designed to generate interviews and, ultimately, job offers. Your letters must command the favorable attention and positive response of prospective employers. With this in mind, it is important from the outset to understand the importance of preparing “original” correspondence for each prospective employer. Mass-produced letters are simply unacceptable. True, individually-typed correspondence is more time-consuming, but it is well worth the effort. Personalize your correspondence as much as possible, and **avoid sending photocopied form letters**. In some cases, a telephone call or personal visit may be made in addition to correspondence. While these methods may be effective, they do not, and should not, take the place of writing individual letters. The time and effort you take to personalize your correspondence will pay substantial dividends.

STRUCTURE OF CORRESPONDENCE

Your letter-writing should follow the principles of proper English usage and effective business correspondence. Generally, it is best to use simple and straightforward language in communicating your message. Be direct and concise.

Job-search correspondence typically includes the following components:

- Writer’s return address
- Date
- Employer’s name and address (inside address)
- Salutation
- Body (usually 3-4 paragraphs)
- Complimentary closing
- Writer’s name and signature
- Enclosure notation (when appropriate)

Consult the samples of job-search correspondence at the conclusion of this guide for additional assistance when preparing your letters.

As when preparing your resume, there are several guidelines to consider when typing job-search correspondence:

- Use standard 8 1/2 x 11-inch paper.
- Use good quality stationery, preferably the same as your resume.
- **Always type correspondence; handwritten letters are unacceptable.** It is preferable to use a PC and have laser printed copies prepared. Neatness counts—a lot!
- Be sure to proofread and correct all spelling and grammatical mistakes. Letters must be error-free. Do not rely on software spell-checks.
- Always type the return address and mailing address on a legal-sized or flat envelope.

TYPES OF CORRESPONDENCE

In view of the importance of job-search correspondence, an explanation of the major types of letters you will be writing during the course of your job hunt follows. Specifically, we will discuss the cover letter, prospecting letter, interview confirmation letter, post-interview thank you, job offer clarification, letter of acceptance, and letter of declination. Additional information on these and other types of job-search correspondence may be obtained in the Career Resource Center located within the Office of Career Services in Hoyt Hall, and in most libraries.

The Cover Letter

Also known as a letter of application, the cover letter does precisely what it is intended to do—provide cover for an enclosure (your resume). A well-written cover letter may mean the difference between getting and not getting the job you want.

Cover letters must have impact. They must be an effective advertisement to introduce the qualities you are promoting in your resume. They should capture the reader’s attention, stress your potential value and benefit, and invite an in-depth reading of your resume.

In general, the basic cover letter has three sections (i.e., paragraphs), each with a specific purpose:

- Paragraph 1 should identify your interest in applying for a specific type of job and, if appropriate, how you heard about the job.

- Paragraph 2 generates reader interest in you by referring to an enclosed resume and including additional information on your qualifications as they apply to the desired position.
- Paragraph 3 makes a request to the employer for an interview (which you will normally need to schedule with a follow-up telephone call). This paragraph should be short, positive, and ask for action without being overly aggressive or “pushy” in tone.

Although cover letters are not needed for resumes submitted during an on-campus interview, they should always be used when sending resumes or returning employment applications to hiring officials.

Prospecting Letter

The purposes of this letter are to inquire about possible vacancies, to get your resume read, and to generate interviews. Prospecting letters are used extensively for long-distance searches. If possible, target specific individuals in specific organizations. As with all job-search correspondence, it is best to avoid generic “Dear Sir/Madam” letters. Structure this letter as you would the basic cover (application) letter, and focus on how your qualifications match the organization’s needs.

Interview Confirmation

Once an interview appointment has been made between you and a prospective employer over the telephone, it is best to follow up that conversation with a confirmation letter indicating the following:

- Restatement of the date and time of the interview appointment.
- Other pertinent details discussed on the phone, such as completing appropriate employment forms prior to the interview, etc.
- Your appreciation of the employer’s further consideration of your qualifications.

Interview confirmation letters provide evidence to employers of the attention you give to detail and your ability to follow through in a work setting. Even though you’ve cleared this first hurdle in your job search, you need to continue to impress the prospective employer throughout the interviewing process itself.

Post-Interview Thank You

Thank-you letters should be sent promptly after each of your interviews. A well-written thank-you letter will:

- Remind the employer who you are.
- Impress him or her with your courtesy and follow-through.
- Remind the employer of your background and qualifications.
- Show your enthusiasm and continued interest in the field or specific position discussed.
- Convey to the employer your sincere appreciation for his or her time and consideration.

Thank-you letters do not need to be lengthy or elaborate, but should be sent as a business courtesy. As with other types of business correspondence, your thank-you letters should be typed.

Job Offer Clarification

This letter is sent in response to an oral or written job offer which does not provide all of the pertinent information you need to make an informed decision. A letter to an employer requesting specific information is most appropriate. Your letter should:

- Indicate your interest in the employer and the offer.
- Ask specifically for the information you need.
- Express appreciation for the cooperation you receive.

Of course, this information may be requested over the telephone, but be certain to confirm all details in writing with the employer to avoid any future misunderstandings.

Letter of Acceptance

While this may be the most enthusiastic letter you will write to an employer, your letter of acceptance must also clarify some important information:

- Refer to the offer made by the employer.
- Restate terms of employment.
- Confirm pre-employment details, starting date, etc.

Close the letter by expressing your appreciation and pleasure at joining the organization.

Letter of Declination

As a courtesy, a formal letter of declination should be sent to each employer who extended you an offer after you have made a decision to accept an offer from another organization. Always be tactful and appreciative in declining an offer—in other words, don’t burn any bridges behind you, since you may want to work for these employers in the future. In any case, be certain to inform them of your acceptance of another employer’s offer.

RECORD KEEPING

It will be to your advantage to keep an organized file of your correspondence to and from each employer. Make and file a copy of each letter you send and receive. As with other aspects of your job search, a centralized record of all action you have taken will lessen the “guesswork” in following up on job prospects, interviews, and offers.

IN CONCLUSION

When preparing job-search correspondence, always strive to stand out favorably from the crowd. The impression created by your correspondence will be a lasting one. The sample letters that follow are designed

to assist you in your correspondence preparation by providing general examples, but should not be used verbatim. You are encouraged to make an appointment with a career advisor at the Office of Career Services to review any or all of your correspondence, or to receive additional tips on how to express your thoughts more effectively in writing.

Don't undervalue the importance of correspondence in your job search—its quality is crucial to your success. Through appropriate and effective correspondence, you're bound to establish a competitive advantage for yourself.

CAREER SERVICES WEB SITE

For additional information about the Office of Career Services, please refer to our Web site at www.muohio.edu/careers/ For assistance in using the Web site, check with our Career Resource Librarian in 205 Hoyt Hall.

100 Campus Avenue
Oxford, OH 45056
miamim@muohio.edu
January 21, 200X

Mr. J. B. Price
Personnel Manager
Golden Enterprises, Inc.
P.O. Box 675
Columbus, OH 43701

Dear Mr. Price:

I am writing to express my interest in the Sales Trainee position you listed recently on the Miami University Office of Career Services' Miami CAREERlink. I will be graduating from Miami in a few months, and am actively seeking a position with a manufacturer of consumer goods.

As you will note in the enclosed resume, I have had meaningful practical experience in sales with Albert K. Department Store in Chicago. In addition, I have completed several courses related to sales while pursuing a major in Psychology at Miami. Also, as a Resident Assistant, I developed strong communication and listening skills working with students in my hall. I believe the combination of my academic background, residence hall experience, and "real world" experience at Albert K.'s will help me to contribute to the ongoing success of Golden Enterprises, Inc.

I would like to explore the Sales Trainee position with you further. I will be in Columbus the week of February 3rd, and would appreciate the opportunity to speak with you or other appropriate Golden Enterprises officials if possible. I will call your office the week of January 28 to arrange an appointment. Should you need additional information, please do not hesitate to contact me by telephone at (513) 523-4321 or by e-mail at miamim@muohio.edu. In the meantime, thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely yours,

Mary Miami

Mary Miami

Enclosure

Cover Letter

9066 Butternut Street
Apartment B
Oxford, OH 45056
jonesla2@muohio.edu
April 14, 200X

Ms. Katherine Ortiz
Director of Development
WLMR-Channel 57
10659 Columbia Parkway
Cincinnati, OH 45219

Dear Ms. Ortiz:

I am interested in your Assistant Director of Development position which I viewed on the CareerBuilder Web site. I have always been a fan of public television, and the opportunity of raising money for such a worthwhile organization is very exciting to me. I am a devoted viewer of such programs as "Great Performances," "Nova," and "Live at Lincoln Center." I am excited at the thought of being able to bring this type of programming to our community.

As you will note in the enclosed resume, I will be graduating from Miami University next month, where I am currently majoring in Speech Communication and minoring in English Literature. I feel confident that my speaking ability will allow me to make the kind of presentations the job undoubtedly requires, and that my writing skills will enable me to continue the effective letter-writing campaigns that you have so successfully initiated. In addition, communication and leadership skills gained through my varied part-time and summer work experiences will contribute to my ability to be successful in this position.

I believe these are the kinds of skills and abilities you are looking for in an Assistant Director of Development, and I would like very much to meet with you to discuss this further. I will call you the week of May 1 to see if we can arrange a meeting.

Sincerely yours,

Laurie Jones

Laurie Jones

Enclosure

Cover Letter

849 Baldwin Avenue
Virginia Beach, VA 23467
watsoncs@muohio.edu
January 5, 200X

Mr. Timothy T. Mellon
Director of College Recruiting
XYZ Corporation
4500 Randolph Drive
Chicago, IL 60601

Dear Mr. Mellon:

I have been reading about XYZ Corporation in the Miami University Office of Career Services and would like to inquire about employment opportunities in your management training program. I want to work in retail management and would like to relocate to the Chicago area.

I shall receive my B.S. degree this May. My interest in business started in Junior Achievement while in high school and developed further through a variety of sales and retail positions during college. My internship with Macy's convinced me to pursue a career in retailing. When I researched the top retailers in Chicago, XYZ emerged as having a strong market position, an excellent training program, and a reputation for excellent customer service. In short, you provide the kind of professional retail environment I seek.

My resume is enclosed for your consideration. My education and experience match the qualifications required of your management trainees, but they do not tell the whole story. I know from customer and supervisor feedback that I have the interpersonal skills and motivation needed to build a successful career in retail management. Also, my practical experience gives me confidence in my career direction and in my ability to perform.

I am very interested in talking with you further about possible employment opportunities with XYZ Corporation. I will plan to call you in the next two weeks to see if we can arrange a meeting time that is convenient to your schedule.

Thank you very much for considering my request. I look forward to talking with you.

Sincerely,

Craig S. Watson

Craig S. Watson

Enclosure

Prospecting Letter

100 Campus Avenue
Oxford, OH 45056
miamim@muohio.edu
January 30, 200X

Mr. J. B. Price
Personnel Manager
Golden Enterprises, Inc.
P.O. Box 675
Columbus, OH 43701

Dear Mr. Price:

I enjoyed speaking to you on the telephone today, and am delighted to have the opportunity to meet with you and further discuss employment opportunities as a Sales Trainee with Golden Enterprises, Inc.

As we discussed, I will arrive at your office in Columbus at 2:00 p.m. on Wednesday, February 8. At this time, I will also deliver the application for employment that you indicated I need to complete prior to our meeting.

Thank you again for your time and consideration. I look forward to meeting you next week.

Sincerely yours,

Mary Miami

Mary Miami

Interview Confirmation

100 Campus Avenue
Oxford, OH 45056
miamim@muohio.edu
April 23, 200X

Mr. J. B. Price
Personnel Manager
Golden Enterprises, Inc.
P.O. Box 675
Columbus, OH 43701

Dear Mr. Price:

I want to thank you for extending an offer to work with Golden Enterprises, Inc. Before I can make a decision regarding this position as a sales trainee with your company, however, I need some clarification on the following two points.

First, I would appreciate it if you could advise me as to where I will be initially assigned. While I am aware that the majority of your sales trainees begin in the Columbus and Cleveland offices of Golden Enterprises, I am unclear about my potential placement.

A second consideration is that of salary. You indicated an annual salary of \$37,500; however, I would appreciate it if you would advise me as to when I can expect to be converted to a straight commission.

Finally, I must add that this position requires exactly the kind of work I want to do. I trust that clarification of these two points will make your offer all the more attractive. I look forward to hearing from you before May 10th.

Sincerely yours,

Mary Miami

Mary Miami

Job Offer Clarification

9066 Butternut Street
Apartment B
Oxford, OH 45056
jonesla2@muohio.edu
April 29, 200X

Ms. Katherine Ortiz
Director of Development
WLMR-Channel 57
10659 Columbia Parkway
Cincinnati, OH 45219

Dear Ms. Ortiz:

Thank you for the opportunity to meet with you to discuss the Assistant Director of Development position at WMLR-Channel 57. I enjoyed our interview very much.

This opportunity sounds exciting and challenging for someone with my energy level and commitment to public television. The Assistant Director of Development position offers an experience ideally suited for someone with my skills and abilities.

I would be happy to provide any additional information you may need regarding my candidacy.

Thank you for your consideration. I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Sincerely yours,

Laurie Jones

Laurie Jones

Post-Interview Thank-You

123 Sorority Row
Oxford, OH 45056
May 15, 200X

Ms. Susan S. Speedy
Personnel Manager
Fast-Track, Inc.
1262 Grover Avenue
Cleveland, OH 44111

Dear Ms. Speedy:

I want to thank you and Mr. Profit for giving me the opportunity to work with Fast-Track, Inc. I am very pleased to accept the position as a Sales Trainee with your Columbus office. The position requires exactly the kind of work I want to do, and I know I will do a good job for you.

As we discussed, I shall begin work on July 1, 200X. In the meantime, I will complete all the necessary employment forms, obtain the required physical examination, and locate housing. I plan to be in Cleveland within the next two weeks and would like to deliver the paperwork to you personally. At that time, we can handle any remaining items pertaining to my employment. I will call next week to schedule an appointment with you.

I enjoyed my interviews with you and Mr. Profit and look forward to beginning my career with your sales team.

Very truly yours,

Linda

Linda J. Laws

Job Offer Acceptance

123 Sorority Row
Oxford, OH 45056
April 1, 200X

Ms. Alice R. Temple
Employee Relations Manager
The Whatsit Company
412 Grandview Boulevard
Columbus, OH 43701

Dear Ms. Temple:

It was indeed a pleasure meeting with you and your sales staff last week to discuss your needs for a regional Whatsit sales representative. Your decision to offer me a position as a sales trainee earlier this week came as a pleasant surprise. However, at this time I am unable to accept your offer of employment.

As I discussed with you during our meeting, I believe one purpose of the plant visit is to explore areas of mutual interest and to assess the fit between the individual and the position. After careful consideration, I have realized that your emphasis on international sales would conflict with my family responsibilities. Consequently, our mutual interests would not be served by an international position at this time.

Should a domestic sales position within The Whatsit Company become available, I would be pleased to be among those considered for the opening. You have a fine operation, and I would enjoy being a part of it.

Best wishes in your search.

Yours truly,

Linda J. Laws

Linda J. Laws

Job Offer Declination

2310 N. College Avenue
Oxford, OH 45056
miamimit@muohio.edu
April 15, 200X

Ms. June J. Jarvis
Assistant Superintendent, Personnel
River City Schools
P. O. Box 1000
River City, GA 38210

Dear Ms. Jarvis:

I am interested in being considered for any elementary teaching vacancies which may develop in the River City Schools for this coming school year. I will graduate from Miami University in May with a Bachelor of Science degree in Education. I have lived in the Atlanta area for most of my life and am very interested in returning to begin my teaching career. In fact, I have recently applied for teacher certification in the state of Georgia and anticipate receiving it soon. Since I am from the Atlanta area, I am aware of the fine reputation of River City Schools.

As you will note in the enclosed resume, I had an excellent student teaching experience and have taught Sunday School the past three years. The combination of my educational background, teaching skills, and sincere interest in a teaching career in the Atlanta area will enable me to make a positive contribution to the River City Schools.

I would be pleased to complete an application or any other appropriate materials so I can become an active candidate. I will contact your office in about two weeks to ensure that you have received my resume and to check on any necessary application procedures.

Thank you for your consideration.

Very truly yours,

Mary T. Miami

Mary T. Miami

Enclosure

Letter of Inquiry for Teacher Candidates

1320 S. Poplar Street, Apt. C
Oxford, OH 45056
meguffim@muohio.edu
April 15, 200X

Dr. D. E. Harris
Superintendent
Great Local Schools
P. O. Box 675
Big Rapids, OH 45371

Dear Dr. Harris:

I am interested in being considered for the high school mathematics teaching position recently posted on the Miami University Office of Career Services' Miami CAREERlink. I will be graduating from Miami in May with a Bachelor of Science degree in Education and will be licensed to teach mathematics in grades 7-12.

As you will note in the enclosed resume, I am currently completing my student teaching with the Fairfield City Schools. In addition, I have had other work experience and been involved in various campus activities that have enabled me to further develop my teaching skills. The combination of these skills, my educational background, and my sincere interest in teaching will allow me to contribute to the ongoing success of Great Local Schools.

I will contact your office in 10-14 days to confirm receipt of the enclosed materials, and would be pleased to provide any additional documentation you may require. In the meantime, I look forward to having the opportunity to further discuss my qualifications with you and hope to hear from you soon. Thank you for your consideration.

Very truly yours,

Michael M. McGuffey

Michael M. McGuffey

Enclosure

Letter in Response to a Posted Vacancy for Teacher Candidates

1320 S. Poplar Street, Apt. C
Oxford, OH 45056
mcguffmm@muohio.edu
April 15, 200X

Dr. G. R. Smith
Personnel Director
Downtown City Schools
P. O. Box 100
Downtown, OH 47831

Dear Dr. Smith:

Thank you for the opportunity to meet with you during your recent visit to Miami University. I enjoyed our interview very much. The teaching opportunities and learning environment at Main Street High School sound exciting and challenging. The position we discussed certainly seems to have many of the features I am seeking as I begin my teaching career. Moreover, I am confident that I can make a positive contribution to the school and community.

The application you gave me is enclosed. Of course, I would be happy to provide any additional information you may need.

Thank you again for your consideration. I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Sincerely,

Michael

Michael M. McGuffey

Enclosure

127 South Maple Street
Oxford, OH 45056
January 20, 200X

Mr. R. U. Hiring
Personnel Manager
XYZ Corporation
2002 North Street
Cleveland, OH 44103

Dear Mr. Hiring:

I am currently a junior at Miami University seeking a summer position that will enable me to further develop skills in business administration and provide an opportunity to apply the concepts learned in my undergraduate studies. I became acquainted with XYZ Corporation by reading your recruitment literature at the Miami University Office of Career Services.

As you will note in the enclosed resume, I have had summer work experience in both manufacturing and retailing. These and other experiences have enabled me to further develop a variety of skills in interpersonal communication, problem-solving, and time management. Therefore, I know that I would be able to make a meaningful contribution to your organization.

I would like the opportunity to further discuss summer employment opportunities with you in person. I am from Cleveland, and plan to be home during our Spring Break, March 16-20. I will contact your office in about two weeks to discuss the possibility of meeting during that week.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I look forward to speaking with you soon.

Sincerely yours,

Terry J. Klein

Terry J. Klein

Enclosure

Post-Interview Thank-You Letter for Teacher Candidates

Intern Prospecting Letter

120 Tappan Hall
Oxford, OH 45056
johnsoew@muohio.edu
February 1, 200X

Ms. Kim Kruskop
Internship Coordinator
Art Institute of Chicago
111 South Michigan Avenue
Chicago, IL 60603

Dear Ms. Kruskop:

I am writing to express my interest in a summer internship with the Art Institute of Chicago. I learned of this opportunity while reviewing the internships listed on the Web site of Miami University's Office of Career Services. I am especially interested in the public affairs internship, and I believe I have the background and qualifications you seek in an intern.

As you will note in the enclosed resume, I have volunteered at the Miami University Art Museum since my first year in college. Through this experience, I have participated in the daily operations of a small campus collection of art. Now in my third year, I have been given the responsibility of training new student volunteers. I believe this valuable experience, combined with my course work in Marketing, Management and Communication, will help me make a contribution to the ongoing success of one of the world's great art museums.

I will be in Chicago March 16-20 and would appreciate the opportunity to discuss my application with you in person. I will call your office next week to arrange a meeting time. Should you need additional information in the interim, please call me at (513) 529-1234, or e-mail me at the above address. Thank you very much for your time and consideration. I look forward to meeting you.

Sincerely yours,

Elizabeth W. Johnson

Elizabeth W. Johnson

Enclosure

Intern Cover Letter

120 Tappan Hall
Oxford, OH 45056
johnsoew@muohio.edu
March 19, 200X

Ms. Kim Kruskop
Internship Coordinator
Art Institute of Chicago
111 South Michigan Avenue
Chicago, IL 60603

Dear Ms. Kruskop:

It was a pleasure meeting you and your colleagues on Tuesday! The internship opportunity we discussed is exactly what I am looking for, and I am sure I can assist you with some of your public affairs initiatives. I was especially excited to learn more about some of the community outreach ideas you have in mind.

Enclosed are copies of the writing samples you requested. Of course, I would be happy to provide any additional information you may need.

Thank you again for your time and consideration. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely yours,

Elizabeth

Elizabeth W. Johnson

Enclosures

Intern Thank-You Letter