

# Cover-Letter Samples

**E**xperiencing a bit of cover-letter-writer's block? Read the following for inspiration—and some worst-case cautionary tales to keep you on the right track.



## An Exemplary Cover Letter

By now, I hope it's sunk in: The cover letter is an ever-evolving entity, tailored to its recipient and to the job description. So obviously there's no such thing as the perfect cover letter—but this one is close. It's got specificity, clarity, appropriate tone, and solid structure.

ELIZABETH ROWLEY

455 MAIN STREET

LEDGEWOOD, NJ 07852

Jane Brandt  
News Magazine  
6400 Chalkstone Avenue  
Dayton, New Jersey 08810

June 6, 2009

Dear Ms. Brandt:

I am writing at the suggestion of David Mitchell to apply for the Advertising Assistant position at *News* magazine. David was my supervisor at the campus Box Office at the University of Michigan. As a long-time admirer of *News* magazine, I was excited to learn about this opening.

I'm a recent graduate of the University of Michigan, where I served as Advertising Manager for the Michigan *Independent*, a weekly student-run magazine with a circulation of 50,000. I was responsible not only for supervising a team that sold over \$5,000 of ads weekly, but also for the layout, copy-editing, and proofreading of the ads themselves. The position required flexibility and responsibility, and allowed me to experience the wide range of tasks involved in an advertising department—from trafficking art files to logging income.

Working at the Michigan Campus Box Office provided hands-on training in professional client relations, both in person and over the phone. A typical shift entailed browsing Filemaker for new events, addressing questions about concerts, handling ticket exchanges, and managing group sales. As a box office staffer, I needed to respond quickly and politely to all requests, while learning the rudiments of both sales and publicity. These are all skills I hope to use in the service of *News* magazine.

I look forward to hearing from you at your earliest convenience.

Sincerely,

*Elizabeth Rowley*

Elizabeth Rowley  
erowley@inbox.com/201-334-4728



ELIZABETH ROWLEY

455 MAIN STREET

LEDGEWOOD, NJ 07852

Jane Brandt  
News Magazine  
6400 Chalkstone Avenue  
Dayton, New Jersey 08810

*Nice use of a personal introduction in the opening line, with additional detail in the following sentence.*

June 6, 2009

*Express your interest without fawning or selling the company back to itself.*

Dear Ms. Brandt:

I am writing at the suggestion of David Mitchell to apply for the Advertising Assistant position at *News* magazine. David was my supervisor at the campus Box Office at the University of Michigan. As a long-time admirer of *News* magazine, I was excited to learn about this opening.

*More specific examples to show insider knowledge of the field and an attention to detail . . .*

I'm a recent graduate of the University of Michigan, where I served as Advertising Manager for the Michigan *Independent*, a weekly student-run magazine with a circulation of 50,000. I was responsible not only for supervising a team that sold over \$5,000 of ads weekly, but also for the layout, copy-editing, and proofreading of the ads themselves. The position required flexibility and responsibility, and allowed me to experience the wide range of tasks involved in an advertising department—from trafficking art files to logging income.

*Contextualize information for your readers.*

*Excellent use of numbers and specifics! That's the kind of thing that grabs a reader's attention.*

*Savvy link from one type of job to another.*

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*A better way of implying these attributes than saying "I am flexible and responsible" . . .*

*Make that Computer Skills section come alive!*

I look forward to hearing from you at your earliest convenience.

Sincerely,

*Elizabeth Rowley*

Elizabeth Rowley  
crowley@inbox.com/201-334-4728



## The “Funny” Cover Letter: Dangerous Territory

Humor is such an iffy thing. If it works, it works, but if it doesn't, disaster! What may work for one reader won't for another. Here's an example of a letter in which some of the humor falls flat and some doesn't. Still, my overall advice is to stay serious. You're applying for a job, not a spot on *SNL* (aspiring comics aside).

SAMUEL TAYLOR

439 Harbor Street • Portland, Maine, 04104

Ms. Monica Jones, Executive Director  
The McGuire Group  
1001 Executive Drive  
Kansas City, MO 66101

July 11, 2009

Dear Ms. Jones

Look no further!

So you need an Assistant to the Executive Director and you'd like him to perform administrative duties while multitasking without appearing to be a chicken with his head cut off?

Show me the filing pile and I'll bring the label-maker after grabbing folders from the supply room I just reorganized. Useful skills include but are not limited to scanning, graphic design, un-jamming photo copiers, translating inner-departmental memos, expense reporting, and delivering piping hot cappuccinos for meetings.

My résumé is included for your consideration. My salary is negotiable, starting at \$28K with health, dental, and 401K. Contact me today to learn what more I have to offer at (910) 234-5678.

Best,

*Samuel Taylor*

Samuel Taylor  
T: (207) 654-3210  
staylor@cox.net

Encl.



**SAMUEL TAYLOR**  
439 Harbor Street • Portland, Maine, 04104

Ms. Monica Jones, Executive Director  
The McGuire Group  
1001 Executive Drive  
Kansas City, MO 66101

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Best,

*Samuel Taylor*

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staylor@cox.net

Encl.

*This lapse in tone might be read as an indicator of poor judgment.*

*Okay, I'll admit, I cracked a smile when I read this paragraph. But I frankly don't think it's worth the risk. Even if an employer thinks you're funny, he might be wary—someone who's brazen enough to joke around in a cover letter might use inappropriate humor in a front of a client.*

*This paragraph actually works well. The examples are concrete and convincing, and the wit is somewhat subdued. Still risky, but here he pulls it off.*

*Never volunteer your salary requirements unless you have to! And don't make demands in a cover letter.*

*Tone problem again. This sounds like a line from a bad personal ad!*

*There's a paragraph missing here; the applicant should explain where he acquired these skills, highlighting and contextualizing jobs from his résumé.*



## Misplaced Pizzazz: A Classic Cover-Letter DON'T

I've seen many cover-letter blunders in my time. So much wasted effort, so many missed opportunities . . . This letter is a good example of how a lack of detail and an even unintentionally arrogant turn-of-phrase can destroy an applicant's chances.

# FAX

**To:** HR

**From:** James Carter

**Fax:** (222) 456-2222

**Pages:** 2

**Phone:** (222) 456-2225

**Date:** April 2009

**Re:**

To Whom It May Concern:

Recently, I have been exploring careers that might suit me experience, education, talents and skills. I am in search of employment and have taken this opportunity to introduce myself.

Allow me to introduce a seasoned administrative professional who has been exposed to the office environment on many levels.

I am a motivated self-starter with drive and determination to get a job done. In addition, my skills range from general office responsibilities to overseeing the needs of staff. I am an organized yet a flexible team player and I continue to grow and learn within my profession.

Would you consider my request for a personal interview? I can be reached at the below number and or address. I am ready!

Sincerely,  
James Carter  
535 Jackson Street  
Sioux City, Iowa 51111  
Cell: 712-329-4307  
E-mail: jcarter@mymail.com

Clearly, this job-hunter didn't read chapter 2 carefully enough. If you don't have a name, and you're sending your materials in by fax, you certainly need to indicate which job you're applying for.



# FAX

**To:** HR

**From:** James Carter

**Fax:** (222) 456-2222

**Pages:** 2

**Phone:** (222) 456-2225

**Date:** April 2009

**Re:**

To Whom It May Concern:

*It's unclear what level this applicant is aiming for—or even what industry! Details, please.*

Recently, I have been exploring careers that might suit **me** experience, education, talents and skills. **I am in search of employment** and have taken this opportunity to introduce myself.

*I believe you meant "my" experience. A typo in the first line means game over.*

Allow me to introduce a seasoned administrative professional who has been exposed to the office environment on many levels.

*Sorry to break it to you, but "general office responsibilities" is not a "skill."*

*Thanks, nice to meet you!*

I am a motivated self-starter with drive and determination to get a job done. In addition, my skills range from general office responsibilities to overseeing the needs of staff. **I am an organized yet a flexible team player and I continue to grow and learn within my profession.**

*Stock phrases like "my profession" convey no information and add no interest.*

Would you consider my request for a personal interview? I can be reached at the below number and or address. **I am ready!**

Sincerely,  
James Carter  
535 Jackson Street  
Sioux City, Iowa 51111  
Cell: 712-329-4307  
E-mail: jcarter@mymail.com

*Yikes!!! I know this is supposed to show initiative and attract attention, but it's just bizarre.*