



Tips for Writing Successful Cover Letters

Your cover letter may make the difference between obtaining a job interview and having your resume ignored, so it makes good sense to devote the necessary time to writing effective cover letters.

1. What is a cover letter?

- An introduction to your resume and qualifications.
 - Should complement, not duplicate, your resume. Purpose is to interpret the data-oriented, factual resume and add a personal touch.
- Used by employers to determine your interest in the position and to assess your written communication skills.
- Most importantly, along with the resume, a way to land an interview offer. It's often your earliest written contact with a potential employer, creating a critical first impression. Should intrigue the employer enough to read your attached resume and then want to personally meet you.
- Should answer the following questions:
 - Why are you writing? Why are you interested in the job? Why are you qualified?

2. Be specific...

- Don't be a "robo-writer" – cover letters should be individually tailored for each targeted position.
 - Should be addressed to a specific person by name and title.
 - Use job title and company name.
 - Use specific examples of why you're applying and why you'd be perfect for the job. Explain the reasons for your interest in the specific organization and identify your most relevant skills or experiences. Remember that relevance is determined by the employer's self-interest; the letter should express a high level of interest and knowledge about the specific position.
 - Reference anyone who told you about the job, or people you know who work at the company.
- Don't be too personal – keep it pertinent.

3. ...and brief.

- Put yourself in the reader's shoes and imagine if you had to read 100 cover letters. What would make a letter stand out? What would you want to read? What would make you keep reading? Would you read more than one page?

4. General format:

- First paragraph: Introduction
 - State the reason for the letter, the position you are applying for, and, if applicable, how you learned of the position.
- Middle paragraphs: Information
 - What makes you perfect for the job? Include specific examples, highlights from your resume, etc. Pay close attention to the job description, even using similar language in your letter. Incorporate your knowledge of the company or organization based on research you've done – it shows your interest!
- Last paragraph: Wrap-up
 - Thank them for their time and consideration. Mention that your resume is enclosed. Provide the best contact information for reaching you should they want to schedule an interview.

5. Visit the Hendrix College Office of Career Services for help getting started on your cover letter or reviewing a first draft. Schedule an appointment by calling 501-450-1440 or emailing careerservices@hendrix.edu.

Speed Art Museum – Louisville, Kentucky Collections and Exhibitions Administrative Assistant

Overview

The Speed Art Museum is Kentucky's largest art museum with a collection that spans 6,000 years of human creativity. An independent museum located on the campus of the University of Louisville, the Speed is currently undergoing a multi-phase expansion and renovation that includes a new North Building, Art Park and a public piazza.

The Speed Art Museum has repeatedly been voted Kentucky's best museum and is considered one of the top ten sites each Kentuckian should visit. The Speed honors its mission to bring great art to our communities through its distinguished collections and as the Commonwealth's number one venue for international art exhibitions.

Job Skills/Requirements

Provides administrative assistance to the Director of Collections and Exhibitions and curators as directed by the Director of Collections and Exhibitions; assists with organizing and coordinating day-to-day work in the Collections and Exhibitions Department.

Minimum Requirements:

Bachelor's Degree in Art, Art History, History, or similar degree. Prior experience in a museum setting, including work with a collections management system, highly desirable. Significant experience with Microsoft Office Suite, including Outlook; experience with Adobe Photoshop and/or Illustrator helpful. Proficiency in German, French, Spanish, or Italian desirable.

Essential Skills:

1. Highly organized and detail oriented.
2. Ability to work accurately and efficiently and keep track of numerous projects simultaneously.
3. Ability to work efficiently and diplomatically with staff, board members, contributors, volunteers, and the public.
4. Good verbal, written communication and clerical skills.
5. Computer and word-processing experience.
6. Commitment to a team approach.
7. Ability to function independently and be flexible to accommodate interruptions and changing priorities.
8. Ability to work effectively with diverse constituents.
9. Knowledge of Museum Ethics, published by the American Association of Museums, and Professional Practices in Art Museums, published by the Association of Art Museum Directors.

July 17, 2012

Mr. John Smith
Director of Collections and Exhibitions
The Speed Art Museum
2035 South Third Street
Louisville, Kentucky 40208

Dear Mr. Smith,

Please accept my application for the open Collections and Exhibitions Administrative Assistant position listed on the Museum's website. With a degree in art history and business, a strong background in and passion for collections management and exhibitions development, and solid leadership, interpersonal, communication and clerical skills, I believe I possess the qualifications you are seeking and can play a valuable role in the Collections and Exhibitions Department of Kentucky's oldest and largest art museum.

During my internship at Greg Thompson Fine Art, I helped curate several collections and exhibitions. While most of the artwork for a proposal or exhibition was predetermined, I was responsible for placing the final collections together and labeling them in a cohesive manner. I also gained firsthand experience in coordinating special exhibitions, from negotiating prices to overseeing the installation of the exhibition to collaborating with artists on the development of lectures that would be held at the gallery in sync with the exhibition. Furthermore, I handled several clerical tasks, such as scheduling meetings for staff members with artists and clients, maintaining the gallery's master mailing list, and submitting information about exhibitions and other events to a variety of local media outlets.

My liberal arts education at Hendrix College also prepared me for the requirements of this position. I combined coursework in studio art, art history and business to create a focus in arts management. Through my business courses and independent study in Arts Management, in particular, I learned many aspects of organizing and coordinating day-to-day tasks in a museum. Also, while studying abroad in London last fall, my abilities to quickly adapt to new situations, function independently in a different environment, and live and work effectively with diverse groups of people were all strengthened.

In addition to my work experience and education, I am also an extremely organized, neat and detail-oriented individual with excellent researching, writing, editing and communication skills. I also understand and appreciate the underlying mission of museums' collections and exhibitions and fully support the American Association of Museums' *Code of Ethics for Museums*.

I would welcome the opportunity to speak with you more about this employment opportunity and my qualifications. Please feel free to contact me at (501) 555-1234 or via email at janedoe@hendrix.edu. I appreciate your time and consideration and look forward to hearing from you soon.

Sincerely,

Jane Doe