

Cover Letter Writing

Traditional Cover Letters

Traditional cover letters introduce you to potential employers, gallery owners, art dealers, etc. Whenever you send a resume to a potential employer you must also send a cover letter. Also, when sending an artist packet to a gallery owner, part of the packet will be a cover letter. Both cover letters and resumes are fluid documents that need to change to meet the needs of the position for which you apply. Below are some general guidelines about how to write a cover letter, and then some examples of cover letters.

Helpful advice: A well written letter will not get you a job but a poorly written letter will guarantee you will not even get an interview.

Heading

The heading of a cover letter includes your name and address, and if appropriate, other contact information. If you have personalized stationery that contains this information make sure to change it when you move or change telephone numbers. Some people print the information horizontally across the top or bottom of the page and others print this information in the top right or left hand corner (see examples). Below your contact information place the name, title if appropriate, and address of the person to whom you are writing. The date upon which you are writing also needs to go in the heading. Remember! Spell the person's name correctly.

Opening paragraph

The opening paragraph serves as an introduction stating who you are and why you are writing. If possible, start with something catchy to gain the reader's attention, but use common sense as well.

Second paragraph

Use the second paragraph to draw the reader's attention to selected information on your resume relevant to the position or person. If you are using the cover letter as part of an artist packet, demonstrate to the reader how your art is appropriate for the gallery or show.

Third paragraph

If appropriate, write a third paragraph explaining how your experiences and skills make you not only qualified for a position but a stand out in the mind of the reader. If you are using the cover letter as a part of an artist packet, you may wish to use a short version of your artist's statement as the third paragraph.

Final paragraph

The final paragraph is a conclusion wrapping up what you have conveyed to the reader and informing the reader how you will contact the reader and/or provide more information if needed.

Enclosures

Add the word “Enclosures” below your signature to alert the reader to look for accompanying material. Common enclosures are resumes, images, artist’s statement, artist’s biography, self-addressed stamped envelope, etc.

Always check your grammar and spelling before sending out your letters.

Cover Letters in the Digital Age

When sending a resume via email then the email itself is the cover letter and while the basic structure is still applicable there is no reason to create headings. Also, since the email is the cover letter there is no reason to attach a separate letter.

All artists/designers NEED to have a web site in the Digital Age. Your cover letter should direct the reader to your web site so that your work can be viewed, whether sending a traditional letter or an email.

Instead of having a cover letter on your web site, your artist statement, bio, etc. can serve much the same purpose educating the reader about you, your work and your employability.

While some people still put out calls for art and wish to see slides, this form of submission is rapidly disappearing and digital representation of work is paramount.

Example of standard cover letter:

Jo Q. Public
210 Main Street
Springfield, WY 12345
June 1, 2002

Ms. Julia Haversham, Recruiter
Bloomingdale's
Exec. Placement, 1000 Third Ave, 3rd Floor
New York, NY 10022

Dear Ms. Haversham,

When I saw your recent posting for a buyer position I knew it was a wonderful way to combine my background in art, design and retail sales.

As you can see from my resume, I graduated magna cum laude from the University of Michigan's School of Art & Design. While attending the university I was able to learn a great deal about marketing strategies and product design in several of my courses. Further, I was able to gain an appreciation for all kinds of aesthetics and have learned to apply this ability when helping customers in my retail sales position at Middle Earth. The store is well known in Ann Arbor for its eclectic mix of merchandise. In addition to my experience in retail sales, I was responsible for keeping track of inventory, as all merchandise was sold on commission.

My communication skills have been greatly enhanced through all of my positions, especially at Campbell Ewald, where I had the responsibility to communicate concepts quickly and clearly to the design team. I am confident these skills will be an asset when negotiating with vendors.

I will be in New York City the week of June 25. I will call you in advance to set up a time when we can meet. If you have any questions, please call me at (211) 987-6543, or e-mail me at jqp@umich.edu.

I look forward to meeting with you.

Sincerely,

Jo Q. Public

Enclosure: Resume

Examples of Alternative Headings

Alternative heading 1:

Jo Q. Public 210 Main Street Springfield, WY 12345

Ms. Julia Haversham, Recruiter
Bloomingdale's
Exec. Placement, 1000 Third Ave, 3rd Floor
New York, NY 10022

June 1, 2002

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Alternative heading 2:

Jo Q. Public
211 Main Street
Springfield, WY 11234

June 1, 2002

Ms. Julia Haversham, Recruiter
Bloomingdale's
Exec. Placement, 1000 third Ave, 3rd Floor
New York, NY 10022

Example of cover letter to accompany artist packet:

Jo Q. Public
211 Main Street
Springfield, WY 12345

June 1, 2002

Mr. Ishmael Ahab, Director
Big Fish Gallery
Provincetown, MA 54321

Dear Mr. Ahab,

During my recent trip to Cape Cod I had the opportunity to visit your gallery. The exhibit entitled "Abstract No More" was a wonderful example of the resurgence in representational painting in the northeast. I understand the artists in that exhibit are indicative of the kind of work your gallery usually displays, which leads me to believe you will be interested in my recent work.

Enclosed you will find a current resume, slides of some of my recent paintings, a statement about the work, and a review from my solo exhibit at the Tarrytown Gallery. I would be happy to send you more slides, or bring examples of my work to the gallery in person.

Thank you in advance for considering my work. I will contact your for follow up by the end of the month.

Sincerely

Jo Q. Public

Enclosures:
Resume
Slides
Statement
Review
SASE

Example of an email with a resume attached:

Dear Mr. Jones,

Your recent posting on the School of Art and Design's website greatly intrigued me. Incredible Games is a leader in cutting edge game design and I have been following the company's rise for the past several years from a 3-person operation to your current status of over 100 employees worldwide.

As you can see from my resume, I have been working steadily over the past 3 years to increase my proficiency in animation and animation software. Your posting particularly stressed the importance of good hand drawing skills as well as proficiency with programs like Maya, Flash, 3D Max and After Effects, all of which I possess. In addition, you can see that I have experience working as part of a team as well as being able to take initiative in my freelance work.

Please take a look at my designs, renderings and animations on my website:

<http://www.joqpublic.com>

I will follow up with you at the end of April, however, if you have any questions in the mean time please don't hesitate to be in touch either via email or phone.

Jo Q. Public

joq@gmail.com

734-555-1234

For more information about cover letters, or to discuss other issues related to career development, contact John Luther, Career Development Coordinator, by stopping at the front desk of the Academic Services Office or calling to make an appointment (734) 764-0397.