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COVER LETTER GUIDE

PROFESSIONAL LETTER GUIDE

This guide is a professional overview and supplement to the Post University Career Services online professional letter builder, Optimal Résumé. In this guide you will find:

- Tips to help you get started
- Step by step guide to help you draft a cover letter
- Sample cover letters

We offer a world of knowledge to help you succeed at your job search. With a little strategy and understanding, you will be writing professional looking letters, like a pro, in no time.

Before you begin using the online career tools, you will need to create an account with an access code.

Create Your Account

1. To locate the access code, log onto Blackboard and go to the **Student Services** tab. Scroll down and the code will be listed at the bottom of the **Career Services** announcement, on the right side.
2. Once you have your access code, go to the Post University Career Services' online career tools, Optimal Résumé, at post.optimalRésumé.com, to create an account.
3. Click the **Create New Account** tab and complete all information.

You will only be asked to create an account once and then you will have access to all the online career tools.

NEW Cover Letter

To create a new Cover Letter, log in to Optimal Résumé at, post.optimalRésumé.com, and follow these steps:

1. Select **Create New Letter**, name it, and select **Start Letter**.
2. Browse **Letter Types** or **Samples** and select a format.

EXISTING Letter

If you have an existing letter, log in to Optimal Résumé at, post.optimalRésumé.com, and sign into your account.

1. Go to the **Document Center**, and choose the Letter you wish to edit.
2. If you wish to delete any Letter, click the garbage can tool on the side of the document and your Letter will be gone. Be aware, this action cannot be reverse.

There are several custom letter formats to choose from, created exclusively for Post University students. We encourage you to experiment with the various formats, styles, action verbs, watch tutorials, use spellcheck and experiment with the editing tools, located on the right.

Once you are finished creating a professional letter, submit it to the **Review Center** listed in the blue bar above your opened document. We will review it and send it back to you with comments.

GOOD LUCK!

COVER LETTERS 101

There are several types of letters you will need to create throughout your career. The one that is the most important is the cover letter. A cover letter acts as a letter of introduction and sets the first impression of you as an employee when applying for an internship or a job. It is advised that you always send a cover letter along with your résumé unless the employer advises you not to. You can use a cover letter for the following:

- Show how your background fits a particular job posting
- Describe your interest in a particular firm or type of company/employer
- Expand upon statements from your résumé that are relevant
- Demonstrate that you have done your homework on the company and how you would be an asset

Use the skills and accomplishments you have acquired to prove you are the right person to do the job. However, getting the first job right out of college can seem daunting when you have little to no work experience. College students worry about their lack of experience and skills, whereas, every student has acquired some skills during their time in college.

Common skills to consider when writing your cover letter and résumé are:

- | | |
|--|--------------------------|
| • Computer Skills | • Good Work Ethic |
| • Communication Skills (verbal, writing) | • Customer Service |
| • Research Skills | • Initiative |
| • Time Management Skills | • Leadership Skills |
| • Organizational Skills | • Problem-Solving skills |
| • Critical Thinking Skills | • Teamwork |
| • Dealing with Ambiguity | • Decision-Making Skills |



Whichever skills you possess, you must be able to support your claim. If you say you have good researching skills and understand computer applications, you must be able to back up those qualities with examples.

You should possess at least 70% of the skills required to be considered a good candidate.

With a little strategy, and practice, you will be creating professional looking cover letters and résumés before you know it. Here are some techniques to get you started:

1. Take the job description and highlight or circle the requirements, skills, and keywords that are important.
2. Analyze the job description and think about how you meet their needs.
3. Create a worksheet and write down how you qualify. On one side, list their keywords and requirements. On the other side, list how you qualify.
4. Translate your qualifications into a letter.
5. Personalize it – address how your skills and accomplishments will fulfill the employer's needs.

HELP WANTED

ENTRY LEVEL MARKETING / ADVERTISING

Looking for a talented and hardworking person who wants to begin their career with a **fast-paced** company. Our ideal employee will be a **self-starter, with strong organizational, and leadership qualities.** Job duties will include, but not limited to, **website development, company branding and writing reports and presentations.**

Must have outstanding **verbal & writing skills,** able to **prioritize and work independently** with minimal supervision, **advanced computer skills,** and **can handle pressure while prioritizing and managing time efficiently.**

Qualified candidates can email their cover letter and résumé to ABCInc@gmail.com. No phone calls please. EEO employer.

Your letter should have a beginning paragraph stating the qualities you bring to the table. The second paragraph should have highlights of your experience and the third paragraph should be the closing. You do not need to reiterate everything in your résumé. You just want to tease the reader a little to make them want to turn the page and continue reading – or call for an interview.

It may take longer to create customized letters and résumés but they will work faster for you than if you send out generic cover letters and résumés. Your professional documents should be unique and original – they should speak to the employer and highlight you as a SUPERSTAR.

EXAMPLE WORKSHEET

JOB REQUIREMENT/KEYWORDS	HOW DO I QUALIFY?
Fast-paced	Worked at McDonalds
Self-starter, work independently	Classes – required to work within deadlines and follow strict research guidelines; GPA 3.7
Website development, branding, marketing	Internship – Kept company intranet updated and accurate. Logged hundreds of hours researching marketing trends, branding techniques, and topics related to website development then presented the findings to the advertising staff - required to write weekly reports.
Strong communication skills: writing, verbal	Internship - Wrote weekly reports and presented minutes at weekly meetings
Time management skills - Can prioritize and is organized	McDonalds – Had to prioritize and be organized to survive working at McDonalds
Computer skills	Accustomed to working with Microsoft Office applications: Word, Excel, PowerPoint, Publisher, Outlook
Leadership skills	Acted as shift leader and trainer at McDonalds

EXAMPLE ONE

MARVIN SWOOP

123 Main Street, Waterbury, CT 06723 ▪ (555) 555-5555 ▪ m.swoop@gmail.com

September 12, 2012

ABC Inc.
555 Church Street
Waterbury, CT 06273

Dear Mr. Smith (or Hiring Manager):

I am interested in the entry level marketing/advertising position with ABC Inc. I have a strong foundation in marketing and website development and I'm able to focus on a task with proven reliability to get the job done. My strong verbal, writing and interpersonal skills, with the ability to thrive in fast paced environments, has always been an asset to former employers.

Highlights of my experience:

- *Advanced computer skills. Experienced with Microsoft Office applications: Word, Excel, PowerPoint, Publisher, Outlook*
- *Exceled at writing clear, marketing pieces, and weekly reports and presentations*
- *Have logged hundreds of hours researching marketing trends, branding techniques, and topics related to website development, marketing, and advertising*
- *Known to be quick, accurate, and thorough in my research abilities*

While working as a team member and leader at McDonalds, I have developed strong organizational and time management skills. Therefore, I can handle pressure while prioritizing and managing time efficiently. I work well on my own, but always contribute to the team as a whole. I have developed work habits that will make me successful - attention to detail, pride in doing good work, excellent telephone and interpersonal skills, plus good conflict resolution abilities.

I have attached my résumé and I would like the opportunity to meet with you to discuss the contributions I can make to your company. I can be reached at (555) 555-5555. I appreciate your time and consideration and I look forward to your call.

Sincerely,

(Sign your name here.)

Marvin Swoop

EXAMPLE TWO

MARVIN SWOOP

123 Main Street, Waterbury, CT 06723 ▪ (555) 555-5555 ▪ m.swoop@gmail.com

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My computer skills are advanced and I excel at writing clear, understandable reports and presentations. I have logged hundreds of hours researching marketing trends, branding techniques, and topics related to website development while working as an intern at XYZ Company. I am known to be both quick and accurate in my research abilities.

While working as a team member and leader at McDonalds, I have developed strong organizational and time management skills. Therefore, I can handle pressure while prioritizing and managing time efficiently. I work well on my own, but always contribute to the team as a whole. I have developed work habits that will make me successful - attention to detail, pride in doing good work, excellent telephone, and interpersonal skills, plus good conflict resolution abilities.

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