

# Writing Letters of Application

## **What is a letter of application?**

Many employers request a letter of application to accompany a resume when applying for a job. This letter introduces the resume and the applicant, and explains very briefly what position the writer is applying for, and why he thinks he is the best person for the job.

## **Do I always need to write one?**

Not necessarily. Some employers only ask for an application form. Some ask for the form and a resume. Some ask for a form, a resume, a letter and references. If you have the opportunity to speak to employers, it's best to ask what they want you to provide. If you are responding to an ad through the mail, you should always include a letter of application. Be sure to read the application procedure carefully, but if you must guess, always err on the "too much" side and include a letter with your application or resume.

## **What should I include in a letter of application?**

Generally, a letter of application includes a statement that you are applying for a specific position. It should include a brief statement as to why you are qualified for the job, or even why you think you are the best candidate for it. One way to do this is to provide a very short story of an accomplishment that connects with something on your resume. Finally, letters of application typically include a thank-you for considering your application and a plan to contact the potential employer in the near future.

## **How long should a letter of application be?**

As with most professional letters, letters of application should be no longer than one page, typed, single-space. This must include the address and signature as well. This is why letters of application are difficult, because you need to make a strong and positive first impression. But, you need to make that impression in a very short amount of space. It helps to draft a letter out, and then see where you can cut, cut, cut!

## **How important is grammar/spelling/punctuation?**

Usually, all of the "surface" issues of writing are very important when writing a letter of application. Even though it's not accurate to do so, many people equate intelligence and/or ability with good spelling and grammar. Even if they don't do this, errors on these types of letters almost always signal carelessness or laziness, two attributes employers typically don't want in employees. Your letter of application is usually the first impression you make on a potential employer, and most employers get more applicants than they can hire, so they have to find reasons to pick one over another. Put these things together, and you've got to be sure your letter is error-free.

## **Does it need to be typed/computed?**

Yes. Along with error-free writing, your letter of application needs to look neat and clean as well. It should be typed or word-processed using an easy-to-read font.

The Community Writing Center has several books that give examples of letters of application, and Writing assistants can provide you with questions to help generate ideas for your letter, and advice on how to make it as brief and clear as possible.

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