

The Cover Letter:

How to grab their attention and snag the interview

GOTTA HAVE IT:

Cover letters are always expected when applying to jobs. Even if they're not expressly requested, they are expected!

PURPOSE:

Cover letter = Gate keeper to the interview, so give them a little taste of what you're made of.

Catch the employer's attention to snag the interview . . . and score the job.

Employers are wondering, "How can this person help US?"

This is your chance to answer their burning question in your own words (versus with just your resume, which answers this question in a more structured, rigid way).

Answer them by addressing the following issues:

- why do you want to work for this org/company
- why do you fit in with the organization/company
- how do you qualify for the position (what unique experience do you have that's applicable to the position)

WRITING STYLE:

Write it in your own words. Let your unique voice come through and convey your . . .

- personality
- communication skills
- enthusiasm
- intellect
- specific interest in the position/organization/company

Clear, concise, grammatically correct.

ESSENTIAL CONTENT:

Tailor the CL to the specific job/company/organization. This is where your research comes in and can make you shine by showing that you know something about the company and the industry. Make it clear that you know who they are, what they do and convey that *you* have chosen them. Try including:

- the name of the company
- the name of the position
- terms and phrases that are meaningful to the employer. Take words from the job posting or the organization website.

Highlight your most important and relevant accomplishments, skills, experienced listed in your resume. Don't make them go digging through your resume. Make the compelling case for why you're right for the job.

FORMAT:

3-4 Paragraphs

1. Your return address (2 lines)

*80 Williams St. Apt 8
Northampton, MA 01060*

2. Date

Monday, October 26, 2009

3. Complete name, title, and address of the recipient

*Professor David B. Kittredge
Department of Natural Resources Conservation
University of Massachusetts-Amherst
160 Holdsworth Way
Amherst, MA 01003-9285*

4. Salutation

- Dear _____ with a colon (:)

- Address your cover letter to a specific person, ideally the person who can hire you.

Use _____ formal titles "Mr.," "Ms.," "Mrs.," "Miss," "Dr.," "Professor," etc.

Dear Professor Kittredge:

5. Introductory Paragraph (1)

-What job you are applying for and how you heard about it

-Any personal connections

-Your general enthusiasm for/interest in the job

-Big picture, what is my motivation, personal philosophy, reasons I'm drawn to the organization/position.

6. Body paragraphs (1 or 2)

-Highlight specific qualifications

-Select the most relevant experiences from resume and discuss them in detail, explaining _____ how these experiences qualify you for this specific job

-refer the reader to your resume for additional details

7. Concluding paragraph (1)

-Reiterate enthusiasm, summarize major qualifications

-Request interview (at reader's convenience)

-Include where and when you can be reached

-Express willingness to provide more information

-Thank reader for their time and consideration

8. Closing

-*Sincerely*, is a good standard closing. Enter 4 single spaces then type name. Hand sign in space if providing hard copy.

EXAMPLES:

1000 Away Street
Northampton, MA 01060

October 26, 2009

Jimmy VonHerpetologist
Academy of Sciences
1000 Road of Knowledge
San Francisco, CA 10000

Dear Mr. VonHerpetologist:

I'm a highly organized and insatiably curious biologist with a passion for wildlife and public outreach. I have experience with animal identification and specimen preparation and I'm excited and honored to work closely with your esteemed herpetological collection. As a Biology and Socio-cultural Anthropology double major at The George Washington University, I strive to always consider humans as members of dynamic biological environments that we not only have a uniquely powerful ability to disrupt, but also to constantly learn from through observation and experimental manipulation. An essential part of wildlife biology is understanding and cataloguing species diversity. Such collections are invaluable resources for scientists and offer a unique opportunity to expose the general public to the rich and inspiring biodiversity of our planet. Your Herpetologist Assistant II working with The California Academy of Sciences herpetological collection will offer me an opportunity to apply my collection handling skills, build my knowledge of amphibians and reptiles and open others' eyes to the wonder of the natural world and, as a result, inspire citizen action to protect natural places and curb environmental destruction.

My lab and field work at The Rocky Mountain Biological Laboratory and The George Washington University has prepared me well for this position. I have collected, identified, and pinned insects and arthropods. I understand the importance of delicate handling and meticulous record keeping. I have collected and organized scientific data for diverse research projects and am adept at computing with spreadsheets, word processing, and statistical analysis programs. As a camp counselor at Farm Camp I lead many aquatic and forest ecology discovery activities and have a working knowledge of amphibian and reptile biology. I'm excited for the chance to delve deeper into the world of herpetology, particularly since these organisms are so often sensitive bio-indicators of environmental change and greater knowledge will prepare me to be a more dynamic and informed conservation biologist. Leading The George Washington University environmental organization and working as a head counselor at Farm Camp helped me develop my capacity to organize people and materials, communicate clearly, and maintain enthusiasm to get projects done. I am outgoing and find great pleasure in educating others about the natural world.

I believe my previous work experience with animal collections and information organization and my zeal for being a liaison between the scientific community and the

general public make me an outstanding candidate for this Herpetologist Assistant II position. I would be delighted to arrange an interview at your earliest convenience. Please contact me at 800-939-7674 or at onetwothree@gmail.com. I look forward to hearing from you!

Sincerely,
I. N. Job

Joseph Tree Climber
2 Highway 175
Hello, WI 53006
(999) XXX-XXXX
joetreeclimber@treeclimber.com

November 5, 2002

Dear Hiring Manager:

Working with trees and plants is a very enjoyable and intriguing career choice for me. The Master Gardener course that I attended this fall has sparked and confirmed my career interest in landscape design, tree care, and horticulture.

I am currently available to begin working for your company.

You will see from my resume and education page that I have been successful in different career fields. Viewing these, you will see that I am eager to learn all phases of this new career opportunity and I will enjoy taking part in any training that is required. In addition to the experiences on my resume, growing up on a dairy farm, operating farm equipment, and working with farm crops are an integral part of my background and career interest.

I would welcome the opportunity to discuss personally my qualifications and objectives with you at your earliest convenience.

Best regards,

Joseph Tree Climber

October 17, 2007

Dear Dr. Froggy,

My name is Amy Aquatic and I will be finishing my B.S. degree in Zoology at North Carolina State University (Raleigh, NC) this December. I am writing to you to express great interest in your research, and to inquire as to whether you will be accepting any Masters students into your lab next fall. I'm excited about starting graduate school and hope to concentrate on amphibian conservation, a field that I feel will be vitally important in the upcoming decades, especially within the context of climate change and the renewed public spirit of environmental consciousness. I am particularly interested in the impacts of anthropogenic landscape change with respect to amphibian populations and their movement. The section on your webpage about the LEAP program intrigued me and I loved reading about the projects dealing with microhabitat use that Dr. Leap is currently pursuing. A possible question of interest for me might be: What quality and configuration of habitat are needed to conserve amphibian populations in the face of climate change? Or, what is the extent of the interaction between land use and climate change with respect to amphibian populations?

This fall I entered my fourth year of research with Dr. Nick Butterfly's lab here at BF State. I have conducted intensive field work on animals ranging from rare butterflies to snakes, but I have been most intellectually and personally engaged in studies of the state threatened Eastern tiger salamander (*Ambystoma tigrinum tigrinum*). Since the winter of 2004, I have been studying the population dynamics of four small subpopulations of salamanders on Ft. Bragg military base (NC). We have been conducting an ongoing mark-recapture study using a combination of PIT tag and photographic identification methods, and I personally spearheaded our entire effort with photo ID. This breeding season I will be conducting a study and writing a paper for a peer-review journal on the outcome of a double blind study which will enable us to determine error rates for both marking methods. In addition, I have also initiated a partnership with Drs. Photo and Search (University of Massachusetts and MIT) and their photo sorting algorithm software (Journal of Applied Ecology, 2007), which will provide an improved photo marking procedure to reduce error rates. If successful, this will expedite our cataloguing process. During the academic year I am a very active member of the campus community, attending lab meetings, participating in service activities, and teaching (for a variety of ages).

I have always dreamed of pursuing a career in ecological research, and I'm motivated to ensure that 1) scientific findings can be applied to management approaches within a community and 2) that science is made available to the general public through educational outreach. After extensive reading of your research and philosophies on life and teaching on your website, I am thrilled that such an

enthusiastic mentor exists in my field of interest. I think that working with you and others at the University of Amphibiology would greatly help me achieve my goals and narrow my focus for my future career path. I look forward to hearing from you regarding this possibility!

Best,
Amy Aquatic

aquaticamy@edu.edu
XXX-XXX-XXXX