Your cover letter is a potential employer’s first impression of you and can be the most vital part of the application packet. A well written letter entices the employer to read your resume. A poorly constructed cover letter may doom your resume to the “No Need to Read” pile. It is important to highlight your skills, knowledge, and experience as these will indicate what you can contribute to the company. Effective cover letters must convey a sense of purpose and project enthusiasm. A “form” cover letter rarely does this. Researching the employer prior to writing the cover letter will give you the opportunity to effectively personalize your letter. Here are some tips:

* **Always** include a cover letter when mailing your resume.
* Try to find out the name and title of the individual who will be receiving your letter. Make sure you spell the name properly and get the proper abbreviation (Mr., Mrs., Ms.). If no contact information is available, address the letter “To Whom It May Concern.”

* Use a proper business format for your letters and make sure the letter is **PERFECT**! Spelling, punctuation, and grammar count. Have someone proofread the letter before mailing it.
* Create the letter on a computer word processing program and use a laser printer on good quality paper. Include one inch margins on all 4 sides, as this white space draws the reader to the body of the letter.
* In the opening paragraph, tell the reader the purpose of the letter. Use “I” statements to explain why you want to work for the organization.
* Employers do not have the time to read lengthy letters, so be sure to get to the point! A cover letter should never exceed one page. Focus on the specific skills and interests you possess that you can offer the employer, using action verbs when describing your experience. Concentrate on skills which match the advertised employment qualifications or the desired program of study. Stress what you can do for the company, not what the company can do for you. Sound upbeat and confident - sell yourself!

* End by thanking the reader and stating that you look forward to meeting with them. Make a specific suggestion for the next step of the process and follow up as promised.

Before mailing a cover letter, can you answer the following questions with a “Yes?”

* Is it clear? Does it state exactly what I want it to state?
* Is it concise? Does it state what I want it to state in the fewest possible words?
* Is it well organized?
* Am I projecting to the employer or college the contribution I can make?
* Have I stressed areas in my experience and/or education that are relevant to the person reading it?

**PARTS OF A COVER LETTER**

HEADING

INSIDE ADDRESS

SALUTATION

INTRODUCTORY PARAGRAPH

Tell why you are writing.

1ST MAIN PARAGRAPH

Describe your qualifications. Sell your skills and knowledge. Tell why you are interested in the company or college. Point out any related experience you have.

2ND MAIN PARAGRAPH

Continue to describe qualifications. Highlight relevant training or classes that relate to the job or major for which you are applying.

CLOSING PARAGRAPH

Close by thanking the reader and requesting an interview.

COMPLIMENTARY CLOSE

SIGNATURE

NAME

**SAMPLE COVER LETTER**

Your Mailing Address

City, State Zip Code

Today’s Date

(4 blank lines)

Employer’s Name

Job Title

Business Name

Business Address

City, State Zip Code

Dear (Mr./Mrs./Ms.) (Use the name of the person that will read the letter):

In response to the February 24th advertisement in the Bangor Daily News, I have enclosed my resume for the Receptionist position.

I have two years of prior work experience as a receptionist with A Telecommunications. My work has involved answering ten incoming lines and greeting customers in a fast-paced office setting. I have also been responsible for all incoming and outgoing mail, as well as purchase orders. I am very detail oriented and able to handle multiple tasks simultaneously.

I am currently completing an Associate Degree in Executive Administrative Assistant at Northern Maine Technical College. In completing this program, I have gained valuable experience in several computer programs including Microsoft Word, Excel, and Access. Additionally, my training has provided me with the skills to reach my goal of office management.

I welcome the opportunity to discuss my qualifications with you in person. I can be reached at (207) 555-1234. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

4 blank lines

Joe Doe