Self-Study Guide to **The Art of Writing Job-Search Letters**

PRE-READING

Crafting the right letter for the right purpose is an important part of the job search process. In most cases, you will need a cover letter for applying for jobs, thanking your interviewer, and accepting or rejecting job offers. To create a positive impact job search letters need to be persuasive, personal, and appreciative, and often provide further evidence of your suitability for a job.

1. Which of the seven basic letters have you written? Which are new to you?
2. One of the basic principles for letter writing is to use action verbs and an active voice. What does this mean for writing your next letter?
3. Generic letters are always ineffective no matter what type of letter you are writing. What does "generic" mean in this context?

POST-READING

Reflect

1. If a job ad says that "cover letters are optional," give reasons why you should submit one anyway.

Apply

2. If possible, the first paragraph of your job search letter should draw connections between you and the company or people who work there. This information will draw the reader in and help the reader see you as a real person.
   a. You know someone who works for the company and he/she spoke highly of their experience.
   b. You had a previous summer job or internship with the company.
   c. You have had a positive interaction with the company in the past, i.e., used their product, took advantage of their service, etc.
   d. You have read about an important change or significant accomplishment concerning the company in question.
   e. Your research has revealed the company's mission which is aligned with your own.
   f. Start out with a quote from a supervisor that uniquely describes you.

   Examples:
   - *I am applying for the position of Financial Analyst at the recommendation of David P. Williams, technical supervisor for business with your company, and my former professor. He indicated that my excellent academic background, combined with my accounting skills would make me a valuable employee in the financial department Blanchard Smith, Inc.*
   - *The ad for a customer service position at ABC Company caught my attention as I began a search for an employer in the Dallas area. Having been awarded the prestigious MNO award in 2011, ABC Corporation is well known in the software industry for quality products and exceptional service.*

Extend and Build

3. Choose an ad that describes an internship or job you would be interested in pursuing. Do these assessment exercises before you begin to write your letter:
   a. Read through the job description and make a list of the skills, attributes, and tasks the employer wants the candidate to have, i.e., research ability, strong computer skills, initiative, etc. Write these down so you have them in front of you when you begin to write.
   b. Look at your resume and write down several examples from your background that showcase the skills, traits, tasks you have listed. These examples may be taken from your coursework, honors, achievements, activities, and/or volunteer work as well as jobs and internships.
   c. Why do these before you begin writing? 1) You highlight the skills that employer is looking for; and 2) you use the best examples to illustrate how you are the best match for the position.

What the employer wants:	What you have to offer:
Proficiency in Microsoft Office	Familiar with Word, Excel, and PowerPoint
Some teaching experience	Tutored students on calculus and French
Good organizational skills	Created new filing system at internship
Time management skills	Worked 15 hours while taking 18 credits
Knowledge of nonprofit community	Volunteered for Red Cross and Habitat for Humanity and participated in cat rescue

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