

The Great Cover Letter
From The Internship Bible
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A resume is a wonderful tool to show employers just what you've done so far - but only if they bother to read it.

Many employers admit that an unsolicited resume usually goes straight into the garbage. After all, a resume by itself has no context. "What job is this person interested in? Who recommended her? I wonder what's for lunch? - And before you know it, "swishhh," it's in the circular file. Ah, but I said usually. There is one way to get that resume read. One way to open doors. One-way to communicate with someone you've never met and with whom you have no connection:

A great letter.

You were expecting something more profound? Believe me, this is plenty profound. For one thing, letter writing is a dying art. A typical boss may receive 50 emails a day, even more phone calls, but an actual letter? It's getting rare. The Great Letter is the beginning of everything.

WHAT MAKES A GREAT LETTER GREAT?

All employers are looking for passion. A Great Letter conveys your passion to work for them. It should also demonstrate your intelligence, with just a touch of humor thrown in for good measure. If you can combine these three elements in a one-page letter, you are halfway in the door already. Like any cover letter, a Great Letter should be laid out in business format, single-spaced, with a line between each paragraph. It should never exceed one page, never contain a typo, and never be mass-produced. While you may be able to use some of the ideas again, the important point is that this letter could only have been written to this one prospective employer about this one job.

Thus, you may not be able to write a Great Letter to every employer. Why? Simply because you won't feel passionate about every job possibility, and you can't fake passion. They'll know if you try.

SO WHAT HAPPENS WHEN I CAN'T WRITE A GREAT LETTER?

You write a good one. A good letter is the next best thing. It conveys all the same things: your interest in the job, a brief summary of your credentials, an understanding of the industry. In fact, you may not even know when you've written a good letter and when you've written a Great Letter. But you'll find out when the phone rings.

Source: Geoff Martz, author of *How to Survive Without Your Parent's Money* (Princeton Review Books/Random House), which provides a section on how to write a cover letter.