

## COVER LETTERS: THE ART OF THE FOLLOW-UP LETTER

### Takeaway Points

- A cover letter should complement – rather than echo – your resume.
- A quote from a colleague or former boss that attests to your skills is worth adding as long as it's written tastefully.
- Gather some information about the company and use some of it in the cover letter. That can impress a hiring manager.

By: Team Pongo

Your resume and cover letter earned you an interview. The interview is done, and you came away convinced you're a strong candidate for the job. But like it or not, there's another step. You need to close the loop by sending a thank-you letter or email to each person who interviewed you.

Nearly 9 out of 10 executives polled in a survey by Accountemps, a staffing service for accounting and finance professionals, agree that sending a thank-you note after an interview can boost a candidate's chances of landing the job. However, the executives estimated that only about half of applicants actually send thank-you notes (and that's probably a generous estimate).

This often overlooked step can leave a strong, positive impression if done right and, more importantly, done promptly.

"Time is your enemy," says interview expert Michael Neece. "A thank-you note differentiates you. It may seem like a little thing, but it can make all the difference. And the faster you send it, the better."

There are four primary reasons why you should send a post-interview follow-up note:

- To thank your interviewers for their time.
- To confirm your interest in the job.
- To reiterate how your skills are valuable to the hiring manager.
- To address important qualifications that did not come up in the interview.
- To submit information the interviewer requested, such as references or work samples.

#### What's the Proper Format?

There is no standard format for a follow-up letter, though it should generally be no longer than three paragraphs and open with a "thank you" to the interviewer, along with stating your interest in the position for which you were interviewed.

The rest depends on what transpired during the interview. For that, ask yourself these questions:

- Did the interviewer ask me anything for which I felt my answer was incomplete?
- Did I feel at ease during the interview? Did the interviewer or work atmosphere give me a sense of comfort or a feeling that I could succeed at this company?
- Was there a moment in the interview when we shared information that I could address in a humorous way so that he or she may remember me?

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*“Write the letter and send it either by email or snail mail no later than the next business day. And, if more than one person interviewed you, send a letter to each, customizing the letters based on what you discussed.”*

Unless the interviewer tells you outright during the interview that you’re a leading candidate for the job, you probably need to cover only the first two of these three questions, though addressing the third can’t hurt unless the employer is too conservative and serious.

But let’s assume all three questions come into play in this sample letter:

Dear Mr. Jones:

Thank you very much for taking the time today to discuss the position of Staff Accountant at ABC Company. Based on my qualifications, our discussion, and my pre-interview research, I am convinced that I would be a strong asset to ABC’s accounting and finance organization and look forward to pursuing this opportunity further.

I wanted to address one point that I don’t believe I addressed adequately during today’s interview, when you asked which work environment among my previous employers I felt most comfortable in. Although I answered that XYZ Company provided the most comfortable atmosphere because of its team-based organizational structure, I wish to add that AAA Inc. had a similar atmosphere and had a mentoring program that allowed me to learn many of the skills I possess today from two highly skilled, senior professionals.

In addition, thanks for sharing with me the fact that you’re a Harvard graduate. I hope that my being a Yale alumnus won’t stand in the way of a potential job offer from ABC.

In the meantime, I look forward to hearing from you regarding this opportunity.

Sincerely,  
John B. Smith

This letter is short, gracious, informative, upbeat, and a little humorous. It also demonstrates confidence on the job seeker’s part. When it comes to sharing humor, though, such as in the third paragraph, err on the side of caution. If the interviewer didn’t display a sense of humor, it’s better to keep the letter serious.

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### Did you know?

Pongo's [Letter Builder](#) enables you to craft well-written cover letters to accompany your resumes. The Letter Builder can even help you write post-interview follow-up letters!

#### When to Write the Letter

As soon as possible after your interview, stop and write a few notes to yourself about something specific that would apply to each interviewer.

Write the letter and send it either by email or snail mail no later than the next business day. And, if more than one person interviewed you, send a letter to each, customizing the letters based on what you discussed.

“You want to keep the image of you fresh in their minds, so follow up promptly,” Neece says. “Each time you reconnect with them, try to add value to your candidacy.”

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