

How can REACH and Career Services Assist Students with Disabilities to Achieve Their Career Goals?

Part V: Prepare Application Materials (Cover Letters, Resumes, References, & Thank-you Notes)

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Cover Letters

Cover Letters are a fantastic way to show a prospective employer that you are interested in and a good fit for the positions to which you are applying. From a disability perspective, you should generally avoid disclosing your disability in cover letters because employers may have a misperception that you are unable to perform in employment positions less effectively than candidates who may not disclose at this stage of the application process¹. In such scenarios, employers may choose to simply remove your application from consideration for interviews, and you are left without opportunities to explain how accommodations qualify you to do the jobs as well as or better than other applicants.

Sample Cover Letter

The following sample cover letter is fairly representative of what would be considered a quality example. Please see the comments throughout the document for suggested changes or points about structure and content.

Ashley K. Vanderbilt² _____
first.lastname@gmail.com 111 N. 333 S., Provo, UT 84604 (012) 345-6789

December 12, 2012³

David C. Johnson
Clearlink
5202 W. Douglas
Salt Lake City, UT 84116

Dear Mr. Johnson: _____

As a marketing major, I am interested in helping Clearlink by driving more consumers to websites and increasing the success of online marketing. Dr. William Downing at Brigham Young University recommended I apply. **Based on the qualifications you have listed and my previous experience, I feel I could add significant value in your marketing department** specifically working with SEO.

Last summer I fine-tuned my **SEO skills while working with the online marketing of a local start-up company**. During my time with the organization **we had a 200% increase in web hits, which led to an increase of 80% in sales**. I have worked with many search engines and websites, including Apache and Flax and am confident that I will quickly learn how to **efficiently gain more**

You need to use the same heading on all of your professional documents.

Avoid addressing your letters "To Whom it May Concern". Most job descriptions contain contact persons who can be referenced in such a letter. If you are unable to find a specific name, addressing the letters to "Hiring Manager" or "HR Department" is acceptable.

Show how your skills or other attributes connect you to the respective companies to which you are applying.

Stating claims about the value you could add to the various employers can show them that you want to work for those companies.

In your cover letters, you need to demonstrate how you used the desired respective skillsets in previous experiences. The author of this particular cover letter referenced the specific SEO skill, which the prospective employer desires, and she demonstrated how she used the same skill in a previous experience.

You need to demonstrate how your stated skillsets positively impacted your previous experiences. As in this example, this can best be done by quantifying experiences into your cover letters. Although you should also do this on your resumes, an advantage of doing so on your cover letters is to further expound on how the respective experiences relate to the jobs to which you are applying.

You need to be bold in stating what you can do to benefit the various companies to which you apply.

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online exposure for Clearlink. My verbal and written skills are equally dependable, which I understand is essential for this type of position.

Thank you for your time and thoughtful consideration. I hope to be **selected for an interview** for this position so I might share in person my enthusiasm about your company and the ways in which I feel I can contribute to your continued success. If you have questions before then please feel free to contact me by phone or email. I look forward to meeting you.

Sincerely,

Ashley K. Vanderbilt

Ashley K. Vanderbilt

Do not be afraid to request opportunities to interview with employers in your cover letters. You could also make statements about your intention to follow up with the employers to schedule interviews (I would recommend doing this follow-up one or two days after the positions are listed to close). If you choose to make statements about follow-up, you need to do it.

1. Mayhew, R. (n.d.). How to explain a disability in a cover letter. Retrieved from <https://work.chron.com/explain-disability-cover-letter-10841.html>
2. REACH (n.d.). REACH toolbox: Which resume is right for you? [PDF file]. Retrieved from https://uac.byu.edu/sites/default/files/uploads/Which%20Resume%20is%20Right%20for%20You_1.pdf
3. Brigham Young University Career Services (n.d.). Cover letter [PDF file]. Retrieved from <http://ucs.byu.edu/sites/default/files/Cover-Letters.pdf>