

Portfolio Project

The following directions and examples will help guide you through the portfolio creation process. Please reference all components of the online video instructions as well as the handouts to ensure your success in this process.

Before creating the portfolio documents, go to **atkinsonsociastudies.weebly.com**, then go to “Courses” and click on “Career Ed”. View the video links under “Portfolio Workshop”.

The portfolio must contain the following items:

- 1. Cover Letter**
- 2. Resume**
- 3. References**

- The cover letter, resume and references page must be separate documents (files).
- All three must have the same letterhead (your name, mailing address, phone number, and email).
- All three must be typed using the same font size and style (with some variation on the resume due to pre-formatting using a Word template).
- This will be a process. Be prepared to make corrections several times before submitting a final product for a grade. No typos, spelling errors, grammatical errors, etc. will be accepted (see note below).

Prepare to retype components of the portfolio until each is completely 100% free of all errors. SAVE your cover letter, resume and reference page on a flash drive, online/cloud storage (e.g., Google Drive or Dropbox), or e-mail a copy to yourself as an attachment for editing purposes and future use. This way you may easily update your portfolio whenever you have a change of address, or have new information (jobs, skills, etc.) to add to your resume.

NOTE: Employers literally throw resumes in the trash when they discover a single error. Employers must be selective in order to narrow down long lists of applicants to a few people who they may actually have time and personnel to interview for possible hire. Employers do not waste time reading resumes of individuals who do not take the time to make their own resume error free. They are looking for people who are highly qualified for the job, and who have taken the time to show that they really want the job, and have therefore, taken the time to make their resume 100% perfect.

The following three sections will help guide you through the Portfolio Project:

1. Writing a Cover Letter
2. Writing a Resume
3. Creating a References Sheet

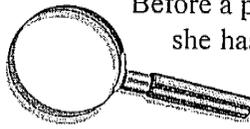
Part 1

Writing a Cover Letter

Use the directions and guidelines in this section to help you write your cover letter. Also, reference the video “Writing a Cover Letter” at atkinsonsocialstudies.weebly.com

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The Anatomy of a Cover Letter



Before a potential employer reads a word of your cover letter, he or she has probably already made an assessment of your organizational skills and attention to detail simply by observing its appearance. How your correspondence looks to a reader—its format, letter quality, and the size, color, and quality of paper—can mean the difference between serious consideration and a negative response. You just can’t afford to settle for a less than perfect presentation of your credentials. This chapter not only outlines the basic format you should follow when writing, but shows you how to put the finishing touches on a top-notch product. Get more information online at <http://www.career-city.com/edge/getinter/cvltr/keyingr/10keys.htm>

Length of the Cover Letter

Four short paragraphs on one page is the ideal length for a cover letter. A longer letter is unlikely to be read.

Paper Size

Use standard 8½-by-11-inch paper for your cover letter. If you use a smaller size, the correspondence will appear more personal than professional; a larger size would simply look awkward. Also, paper other than the standard size is easily lost in an employer’s files if too small or discarded for not fitting with other documents if too large.

Paper Color

Like your resume, white and ivory are the only acceptable paper colors for a cover letter.

Paper Quality

As with resumes, standard, inexpensive office paper (twenty-pound bond) is generally acceptable for most positions. Executive and top-level positions may require more expensive stationery papers, such as ivory laid.

Preprinted Stationery

Unless you’re a top-level executive with years of experience, you should avoid using preprinted stationery. Also, never use the stationery of your current employer.

Typing and Printing

Your best bet is to use a word processor with letter-quality type or a word processing program on a computer with a letter-quality printer. If these options are not available to you, a high-quality office typewriter or a good, clean home typewriter is a satisfactory alternative for your cover letter. Handwritten letters are not acceptable.

The Envelope

Your cover letter should always be mailed in a standard, business-sized envelope. Unless your handwriting is extremely neat and easy to read, you should always type your envelopes. Also, address your envelope, by full name and title, specifically to the contact person you identified in your cover letter.

Ten Key Ingredients to Successful Cover Letters

Your cover letter may be printed on the highest quality paper and typed on a state-of-the-art computer, but if it isn't arranged according to the proper format, you probably won't come across as the best candidate for the position you are applying for. Certain basic guidelines should be followed when composing the actual contents of your letter.

1. **Return address.** Your return address and phone number should appear in the top right-hand corner, without your name. As a general rule, you should avoid abbreviations in the addresses of your cover letters, although abbreviating the state is increasingly common in all business correspondence.
2. **The date.** The date should appear two lines beneath your return address on the right-hand side of the page. Write out the date; do not use the abbreviated format.

Example: May 12, 1996

3. **The addressee.** Always try to find out the name and proper title of the addressee before you send out a cover letter. Two lines beneath the date, list the full name of the addressee. On the next line, list the individual's formal business title; on the subsequent line, list the name of the company. This is followed by the company's address, which generally takes two lines. Occasionally, the individual's full title or the company name and address will be very long, and can appear awkward on the usual number of lines allocated. In this case, you may prefer using an extra line.
4. **The salutation.** The salutation should be typed two lines beneath the company's address. It should begin with "Dear Mr." or "Dear Ms.," followed by the individual's last name and a colon. Even if you have previously spoken with an addressee who has asked to be called by his

or her first name, you should never use a first name in the salutation.

In some cases, such as when you are responding to "blind" advertisements, it may be necessary to adopt a general salutation. In such a circumstance, salutations such as "Dear Hiring Manager" or "Good Morning" may be stronger choices than "Dear Sir or Madam" or "To whom it may concern." In any case, avoid potentially offensive salutations like "Dear Gentlemen," or "Dear Sirs."

5. **First paragraph.** State immediately and concisely which position you wish to be considered for and what makes you the best candidate for that position. If you are responding to a classified ad, be sure to reference the name of the publication and the date the ad appeared. Keep the first paragraph short and hard-hitting.

Example: Having majored in mathematics at Boston University, where I also worked as a Research Assistant, I am confident that I would make a very successful Research Trainee in your economics research department.

6. **Second paragraph.** Detail what you could contribute to this company, and show how your qualifications will benefit this firm. If you're responding to a classified ad, specifically discuss how your skills relate to the job's requirements. Remember, keep it brief!

Example: In addition to my strong background in mathematics, I also offer significant business experience, having worked in a data processing firm, a bookstore, and a restaurant. I am sure that my courses in statistics and computer programming would prove particularly useful in the position of Trainee.

7. **Third paragraph.** Describe your interest in the corporation. Subtly emphasize your knowledge about this firm (the result of your research effort) and your familiarity with the industry. You should present yourself as eager to work for any company where you apply for a position.

Example: I am attracted to City Bank by your recent rapid growth and the superior reputation of your economic research department. After studying different commercial banks, I have concluded that City Bank will be in a strong competitive position to benefit from upcoming changes in the industry, such as the phasing out of Regulation Q.

8. **Final paragraph.** In the closing paragraph, specifically request an interview. Include your phone number and the hours you can be reached, or mention that you will follow up with a phone call within several days to arrange an interview at a mutually convenient time.

Example: I would like to interview with you at your earliest convenience. I am best reached between 3:00 and 5:00 P.M. at (617) 555-5555.

9. **The closing.** The closing should be two lines beneath the body of the letter and should be aligned with your return address and the date (toward the right of the page). Keep the closing simple—"Sincerely" suffices. Four lines underneath this, type in your full name as it appears on your resume.

Sign above your typed name in black ink. Don't forget to sign the letter! As silly as it sounds, people often forget this seemingly obvious detail. An oversight such as this suggests that you don't take care with your work.

10. **The enclosure line.** If you are enclosing a resume or other materials with your letter, include an enclosure line, flush left, at the bottom of the letter.

Example: Enc. resume

General Model for a Cover Letter

Your Address

Your Phone

Date

Contact Person Name

Title

Company

Address

Dear Mr./Ms. _____:

Immediately explain why your background makes you the best candidate for the position you are applying for. Keep the first paragraph short and hard-hitting.

Detail what you could contribute to this company. Show how your qualifications will benefit this firm. Remember to keep this letter short; few employers will read a cover letter over one page.

Describe your interest in the corporation. Subtly emphasize your knowledge about this firm (the result of your research effort) and your familiarity with the industry. You should present yourself as eager to work for any company which you interview with.

In the closing paragraph, you should specifically request an interview. Include your phone number and the hours when you can be reached. Alternatively, you might prefer to mention that you will follow up with a phone call (to arrange an interview at a mutually convenient time within several days).

Sincerely,

Your full name
(typed)

Enc. resume

Scott Atkinson
55 15th Street
Port Huron, MI 48060
(810) 455-0029 ext. 1654
mr.atkinson106@gmail.com

August 22, 2013

Daryl R. Conrad
Director for Human Resources
Port Huron Area School District
1925 Lapeer Avenue, P.O. Box 5013
Port Huron, MI 48060-5013

Dear Mr. Conrad:

I have recently heard of a job opportunity for a social studies night school teacher at Harrison Center. I was informed of the position by Gloria Henry, the principal at Harrison Center. I also cross-referenced the opening on the PHASD website and I feel that I possess the drive, skills, and desire which would make me a perfect fit for the position.

I am currently one of two social studies teachers at Harrison Center. I have been with the program since the 2009-2010 school year. I know the school's staff very well, including the principal, Gloria Henry, who hired me into my current position. I would be perfect for the night school position because of my familiarity with the school and its day-to-day operations.

I understand that the school functions a lot differently than a traditional high school setting. Working at Harrison Center has provided me with experience that sets me apart from a traditional classroom teacher. This alternative approach has helped me become proficient in balancing the wide array of student learning styles and dispositions within the classroom. I feel that my experience in this setting has translated into me becoming a better teacher in that I am able to work with a variety of skill levels and ensure that each person is given the opportunity to expand their individual skill set.

I am highly confident in my abilities as a teacher. I feel that I have prepared myself in ways which would make me a great asset to Harrison Center's night school program. I would like to arrange an interview at your convenience. I can be reached at (810) 455-0029, ext. 1654 between the hours of 8:00 am and 3:00 pm. I look forward to speaking with you in more detail about this opportunity and the possibility of filling this position at Harrison Center. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Scott Atkinson

Action verbs make a cover letter come alive. Which are right for your cover letter?

| | | |
|--------------|-------------|--------------|
| accelerated | evaluated | prepared |
| accomplished | examined | presented |
| achieved | executed | prioritized |
| administered | expanded | processed |
| advised | expedited | produced |
| analyzed | extracted | programmed |
| appointed | facilitated | promoted |
| arranged | formulated | proposed |
| assisted | founded | provided |
| attained | generated | published |
| balanced | headed | recruited |
| budgeted | helped | regulated |
| built | identified | reorganized |
| calculated | illustrated | represented |
| catalogued | implemented | researched |
| chaired | improved | resolved |
| collaborated | increased | restored |
| compiled | initiated | restructured |
| composed | innovated | retrieved |
| computed | instructed | reviewed |
| conducted | integrated | revised |
| constructed | interpreted | scheduled |
| consulted | launched | shaped |
| created | maintained | sold |
| delegated | managed | solved |
| demonstrated | marketed | streamlined |
| designed | mediated | summarized |
| developed | monitored | supervised |
| devised | negotiated | taught |
| directed | operated | trained |
| edited | organized | upgraded |
| educated | performed | utilized |
| encouraged | persuaded | worked |
| established | planned | wrote |

Vary Your Sentence Length

Initially, your cover letter will be scanned, not read. Short, concise sentences are much more effective than long-winded ones. Paragraphs should be no longer than three sentences. If necessary, you can break up the material into two or more paragraphs.

Part 2

Writing a Resume

The following section explains how to create a professional looking resume using a pre-formatted template from Microsoft Word. The templates also serve as a useful guideline if the student chooses to format a resume without using a template.

Reference the video “Writing a Resume” at atkinsonsociastudies.weebly.com

How to Use Microsoft Word’s Resume Templates

1. Go to the File menu and select “New.”
2. In the New Document menu that appears on the screen, choose “Resumes and CVs.”
3. In the next menu, select the label “Basic Resumes.”
4. Choose the resume style of your liking. You may have to click the “Download” button to retrieve the template from the online database.
5. Once the resume appears on the screen, click inside the brackets [] and type over the selected text with your personal text.

NOTE: The next pages are samples of actual resumes created using Microsoft Word templates. Any of these formats may be customized to fit your own personal preferences.

[Click here and type address]

[Put phone, fax, and e-mail here]

Deborah Greer

Objective

[Click here and type your objective]

Experience

1990–1994 Arbor Shoes South Ridge, WA

National Sales Manager

- Increased sales from \$50 million to \$100 million.
- Doubled sales per representative from \$5 million to \$10 million.
- Suggested new products that increased earnings by 23%.

1985–1990 Ferguson and Bardwell South Ridge, WA

District Sales Manager

- Increased regional sales from \$25 million to \$350 million.
- Managed 250 sales representatives in 10 Western states.
- Implemented training course for new recruits — speeding profitability.

1980–1984 Duffy Vineyards South Ridge, WA

Senior Sales Representative

- Expanded sales team from 50 to 100 representatives.
- Tripled division revenues for each sales associate.
- Expanded sales to include mass-market accounts.

1975–1980 Lit Ware, Inc. South Ridge, WA

Sales Representative

- Expanded territorial sales by 400%.
- Received company's highest sales award four years in a row.
- Developed Excellence in Sales training course.

Education

1971–1975 South Ridge State University South Ridge, WA

- B.A., Business Administration and Computer Science.
- Graduated *summa cum laude*.

Interests

South Ridge Board of Directors, running, gardening, carpentry, computers.

RICH ANDREWS

OBJECTIVE

[Click [here](#) and type objective]

EXPERIENCE

1990–1994 Arbor Shoe South Ridge, SC

National Sales Manager

- Increased sales from \$50 million to \$100 million.
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- B.A., Business Administration and Computer Science.
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INTERESTS

South Ridge Board of Directors, running, gardening, carpentry, computers.

[Click here and type address]

[Put Phone, Fax and E-mail here]

Max Benson

]

Objective [Click **here** and type objective]

Experience 1990–1994 Arbor Shoe South Ridge, SC

National Sales Manager

- Increased sales from \$50 million to \$100 million.
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Education 1971–1975 South Ridge State University South Ridge, SC

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- Graduated *summa cum laude*.

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Part 3

Creating a References Sheet

Use the directions and guidelines in this section to help you write your cover letter. Also, see the video “Writing a References Page” at atkinsonsociastudies.weebly.com

Individuals have heard the term “reference” used in relation to employment. However many people do not clearly understand the role a reference plays as well as how to best select someone to serve as a reference.

A reference is an individual who is willing to speak on your behalf regarding qualifications for employment. The standard or minimum number of references for an individual to have is **three**. However some organizations may request a larger number of references. An individual can ask any number of people to serve as a reference to be prepared. An individual may also be selective and use certain references for very specific opportunities.

A person who serves as a reference may be asked to write a letter of recommendation. References may also be asked to complete recommendation forms that might be provided by an employer. **You must always gain an individual’s permission to list them as a reference.** It is best to ask the individual(s) to serve as a reference in person, by telephone or by email if distance is a factor. It is also important to ask if the individual can **SUPPORT** your application for employment. The idea is to have references that speak **positively** about your qualifications and may realistically evaluate your ability to perform a job.

The best individuals to ask to serve as references are individuals who have directly seen you in specific settings using the skills needed/desired. These individuals are normally current or former employers, teachers, or coaches. Typically a personal reference – an individual who has just known you for a long period of time (family member, friend of the family, or religious leader) – may not be the best choice.

It is also recommended that you create a list of your references or a references sheet which can serve as an addendum to your resume. It can also be easily distributed during or after an interview.

The following page shows a sample Reference sheet, and how it should be formatted. Note that each reference’s contact information is formatted as follows:

- Name
- Title
- Organization/Company
 - Street Address
 - Phone Number
 - E-mail (optional)

55 15th Street, Port Huron, MI, 48060 • 810-455-0029 • mr.atkinson@gmail.com

Scott Atkinson

REFERENCES

Paul O. Picasso
Executive Director
Kresge Art Museum
423 Auditorium Drive
East Lansing, MI 48825
(517) 351-2112

Frank N. Stein
General Manager
Carmike Cinemas
4350 24th Avenue #15
Fort Gratiot Township, MI 48059
(810) 385-8829

James Hetfield
Music Teacher
Hard Rock High School
2350 Metal Way
Rockway, CA 92276
(310) 565-9687