



# Extension Extra

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## Workforce Series #7

# The Job Interview Follow-Up Letter

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### The Follow-up Letter

After a job interview, you should always send a follow-up letter to the employer. Job candidates that write follow-up letters enhance themselves—thus bringing them one step closer to obtaining the job. You should write a brief, one page letter immediately after each interview you have, ideally within twenty-four hours.

Write personal follow-up letters specifically relating to the needs, desires, and personalities of each employer. A well-written follow-up letter greatly increases the chances of receiving a second interview or a job offer. The employer is weighing the pluses and minuses of each candidate to guide the decision-making process. A follow-up letter is one indication that the candidate is serious about employment. Make sure you address the letter to the primary interviewer.

A follow-up letter should confirm your interest in the job and the employer. Even if you feel that the interview did not go well, a follow-up letter provides one more opportunity to express yourself. You may be interested in working for the company at a later date or in a different position, and the thank you letter might help keep you in the employer's mind. Additionally, employers network with each others, so the extra touch of a thank you might make enough of an impression for them to make a referral.

### Qualities of a Follow-up Letter

The follow-up letter should be one page containing three or four paragraphs. The opening paragraph expresses appreciation for the opportunity to interview and makes a specific reference to the job. The second paragraph restates your interest in the position. It also stresses key points in your qualifications that work in your favor for the position. The third paragraph stresses the "fit." Restate your strengths, emphasizing the matches between your abilities and the requirements of the job description and the company. The final paragraph restates appreciation for the interview or the time spent with the recruiter and closes with a positive statement requesting to meet again.

### Three Types of Follow-up Letters

There are three basic types of follow-up letters: the recall, the accent, and the afterthought.

**The Recall Letter** is used to remind the employer of the qualifications you possess that really matter and to demonstrate your continued interest in the job. Its purpose is to restate the qualifications that make you a viable job candidate. Assuming the interview was favorable, a recall follow-up letter serves as an extra reminder to the recruiter and demonstrates your enthusiasm for the position.

**The Accent Letter** is used to emphasize a specific point that was well-received by the employer. To write a successful accent follow-up letter, it is important that you listened to the employer's responses to your statements. Restating your qualifications and skills, the accent letter will exemplify or highlight your potential contributions to the employer's immediate and future needs.

**The Afterthought Letter** is used to supply important information that was left out of the interview. The afterthought letter is not an apology but a definite statement of your ability and desire to do the job well. It can be used to counteract the negative impression of an interview that went marginally well by providing additional information about the skills and abilities that make you the candidate for the job.

After reviewing your interview, you may realize that you ignored some aspect of your background that would have favorably impressed the interviewer. Once you have recognized how you could have better answered a question, make notes and then write your afterthought letter directly stating the qualifications that make you the right person for the job.

If you were nervous during the interview and know that your ability to perform the work is higher than your performance during the interview indicated, the

afterthought letter can draw attention away from the interview and place it on your qualifications.

### **Additional Information of Mutual Interest**

Perhaps the employer indicated an interest in your skills and talents or previous accomplishments during the interview. With your follow-up letter, send examples of your work such as brochures, writing samples, photographs, etc. If the conversation during the interview provided any possibilities for follow-up, such as reading an article or book, mention in your follow-up letter how much you learned from that information. Or if you discovered during the interview that you and the recruiter have common interests, consider enclosing an article you found on the topic. All of these ideas will help you to establish a sense of camaraderie with the employer.

### **To Telephone the Employer or Not?**

Writing a follow-up letter is better than calling the employer a day or two after an interview. Hiring someone is often a lengthy and difficult process. Calling puts the employer in an uncomfortable position, whether the decision has been made or not.

When more than five to ten days have gone by and you have not heard from the employer, you should make a phone call inquiring about your status. Express your continued interest in the company and the position, and inquire as to whether or not a decision has been made or when you will be notified. If the position has been filled, consider asking how you could improve yourself for the next interview or position. If you are honest and not overly aggressive or defensive, the employer may give you some valuable insights.

### **Review the Interview**

Immediately after the interview, make notes to yourself on what you think were the employer's biggest concerns. Simply write down all the questions the employer asked

and write down his or her responses to your statements. What concerns showed up often? What concerns took the most interview time? What concerns sparked interest and continuing conversation? Once you know the concerns, your follow-up letter can show how your strengths will meet the employer's needs.

### **Handling Rejection**

The key to handling rejection is to be prepared for it and not to take it personally. Continue to job-hunt and to interview. Stay positive and motivated and learn from the process. Keep reading and learning about how to improve your communication skills.

A well-written thank you note, mailed within one or two days of receiving notice of rejection, makes a positive statement. A thank you note expressing disappointment at not being offered the job, but also thanking the company for consideration of your qualifications, may lead the employer to giving you some additional contacts. Understand that anyone you meet while finding a job can become a valuable contact. You need to network and enjoy getting to know people you meet during your job search. Above all, you need to be courteous, stay positive and motivated, and learn from the process.

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