



Lesson Plans

Lesson Plan:

Sector: Job Search

Occupation: Generic

Theme: Cover Letters

Occupational Task: Write a cover letter in response to an advertisement or posting.

Describe Essential Skills (ES) developed during the learning activities:

Reading Text: Chooses and integrate information from various sources or from several parts of a single text. Identify relevant and irrelevant information. (ES 3)

Document Use: Document is somewhat complex. Multiple pieces of information organized in sections. Locate one or more pieces of information using multiple search criteria, enter multiple pieces of information. (ES 3)

Writing: Writing task has an established format, either longer or shorter pieces of writing intended to inform, explain Content of the writing may be extensive but it is readily available from established sources. (ES 3)

Oral Communication: Moderate oral communication demands, exchanges information, obtains information by questioning multiple sources, presents and discusses simple options and advises on choices. Moderate range of subject matter, familiar topics, usually one main issue. Moderate range of general and context specific or technical vocabulary and idioms. (ES 2)

Working with Others: Participate in a group discussion to compare ideas on determining pertinent information. (ES 2)

Thinking Skills: Moderate degree of inference is required to match information given to information required. (ES 3)

Computer Use: Input information in an ad-response cover letter, use various sites and job boards on the internet for research. (ES 3)

Continuous Learning: Learn alternate formats for cover letters and use appropriate one to apply for a job. (ES 2/3)

Indicate the Canadian Language Benchmarks (CLB) competencies developed during the learning activities:

Speaking: Participate in a small group informal discussion expressing opinions, qualifying opinion and supporting or opposing a proposed solution. (CLB 7/8)

Listening: Identify facts and opinions in conversations about abstract ideas on a familiar topic. Evaluate the validity of a suggestion or a proposed solution for a specific context. (CLB 8)

Reading: Demonstrate comprehension of a moderately complex formatted text on a familiar topic. Access and locate three or four pieces of information from on-line electronic reference sources. Follow coherent extended instructional directions. (CLB 8)

Writing: Write three or four paragraphs to provide a detailed description on a familiar topic. (CLB 8)

Language and culture focus for the learning activities:



Vocabulary

1. Use keywords to describe qualifications, skills and capabilities: industry, profession or job function, specific nouns or groups of nouns. i.e. strategic planning, continuous process improvement, competitive market and product positioning, debt financing, computer-aided engineering (CAE), volunteer recruitment, etc (see *Cover Letter Magic*, pages 365-386)
2. Action verbs used to establish interest and professional tone in cover letter and resume. Some examples, accelerate, arbitrate, mastermind, orient, influence, target, promote, succeed, etc instead of “do” or “responsible for” or “duties were” or “provide” or “work” etc. (see *Cover Letter Magic*, pages 387-388)
3. Terminology and abbreviations in job ads. For example, temporary, fulltime, casual, an asset, fast-paced environment, likes to be part of a team, a requirement, DOE, FT/PT, TBD, etc.

Culture

- All employers expect that a knowledgeable, focused and serious job searcher will submit a cover letter with a resume.
- A cover letter is the first impression an employer/human resources has of the job candidate and from this will make a decision as to whether to continue and read the resume or not.
- A cover letter is the first written document of a job searcher’s “marketing campaign” and is informative, relevant, interesting and job specific. It will have an informal but professional tone.
- Companies will scan cover letters and resumes for industry, profession or job function specific keywords.

Suggested teacher resources and classroom materials needed:

1. Enelow, Wendy S. and Kursmark, Louise M. *Cover Letter Magic* (Indianapolis, IN: JIST, 2004) ISBN 1-56370-986-4. An excellent easy to use resource written in a “user friendly” tone and with great tips for everyone.
2. Enelow, Wendy S. and Kursmark, Louise M. *Cover Letter Magic*. Before-and-After Cover Letter Transformations, pages 161-178
3. Enelow, Wendy S. and Kursmark, Louise M. *Cover Letter Magic*. Sample Cover Letters for all professionals and trades, pages 179-295
4. Enelow, Wendy S. and Kursmark, Louise M. *Cover Letter Magic*. Using Keywords, pages 365-386
5. Enelow, Wendy S. and Kursmark, Louise M. *Cover Letter Magic*. Action Verbs for Cover Letters, pages 387-388
6. Internet: Monster.ca/job, Workopolis.com, Service Canada Job Bank
7. Local newspapers. Classified section or Career section
8. Shoppers Home Health Care Sample Job Posting, “Customer Service” with questions.
9. Teacher provides a selection of job postings from the newspaper and internet. Learners contribute.

Estimated time for the learning activities: 2 hours



Learner Profile:

1. The learners have professional backgrounds. They are Engineers, Accountants, Bankers, Health Care Professionals, Computer Programmers and Teachers etc and are looking for a job related to their area of expertise.
2. The learners have been asked to find, and bring to the lesson, job ads for the professions represented in class.
3. The learners have studied the purpose and format of a cover letter.
4. The learners have studied common expressions and abbreviations found in job ads.

Learning Objectives:

1. Read a job posting and identify the pertinent information that is needed to write an ad-response cover letter.
2. Identify common abbreviations used in want ads and explain their meanings.
3. Match his qualifications (skills, experience, education and personal qualities) to those being sought by the employer.
4. Write an ad-response cover letter adhering to the prescribed format.
5. Use group discussion to formulate ideas.

Learning activities:

1. Give each pair a copy of the "customer service" job posting and a handout with questions. (see attached)
 2. Learners answer the questions together by finding the required information in the ad and underlining it.
 3. In large group, elicit and list on the blackboard, under the heading "**What the Company Requires**" the requirements they found in the sample job posting. List the requirements in the order they appear in the ad. (30 min)
 4. The instructor elicits through question and answer that:
 - the job ad must be read carefully;
 - the reader understands all of the stated and unstated requirements;
 - the objective of writing a cover letter is to interest the employer enough in to read the resume;
 - qualifications of the applicant match the requirements of the company;
 - ad-response cover letter requires the qualifications, education, skills and experience of the applicant to be presented in the same order as in the job ad; and
 - meanings of common expressions found in postings are understood. (10min)
 5. The instructor puts the following heading on the board "**What I Have To Offer**". Elicit from the learners how they could express their qualifications to match the requirements in the sample job posting. They can use their own background or make up qualifications. (20 min)
 6. In groups of three, give each learner a different job advertisement. The learners, on their own, decide what the employer is asking for, stated and unstated, and make a list of what they feel is the pertinent information. They exchange the ad and repeat the process.
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Do this until each learner in the group has looked at all of the ads. The learners in the group compare and discuss their decisions. (20min)

7. The groups chose one of the ads and brainstorm as to how they would respond to it in a cover letter. Write, as a group, an appropriate cover letter on a flipchart. Each group presents its work to the class in large group discussion. Teacher points out important aspects, makes comments, and summarizes how a cover letter is written in response to a posting stressing that:

- wording in the cover letter must not be the same as in the resume
 - inclusion of keywords for job function, profession or industry make a cover letter effective
 - use of action verbs communicate professionally what you have done and accomplished
- Learners refer to the list of keywords and action verbs. (see Keywords and Action Verbs for Cover Letters) (40min)

Additional and/or extension learning activities:

1. In pairs, the learners look at two sets of "Before and After" cover letters. (See Before-and-After Cover Letters Transformations) The learners discuss the transformations.
2. In large group, discuss and list on the blackboard the qualities of a relevant, interesting and professional cover letter.
3. Each learner is given a job posting related to his area of expertise. He/she writes a cover letter using the ad-response format and incorporates the qualities of an effective cover letter.
4. Input the ad-response cover letter on the computer while paying attention to grammar, punctuation, spelling and format.

Evaluation:

1. Learner will submit an ad-response cover letter in prescribed format. It will be evaluated by the instructor for format, content, appropriate keywords and action verbs, relevance, interest and professional tone. It will also be assessed for the technical qualities of correct spelling, punctuation, grammar, and computer setup.
2. Learner will participate in pair and group discussion and activities. He/she will be evaluated informally through observation by the instructor for giving input, listening to other ideas, showing respect and working cooperatively on a task.

Task Writer:

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