

Write for the Job

Writing Successful Résumés and Cover Letters

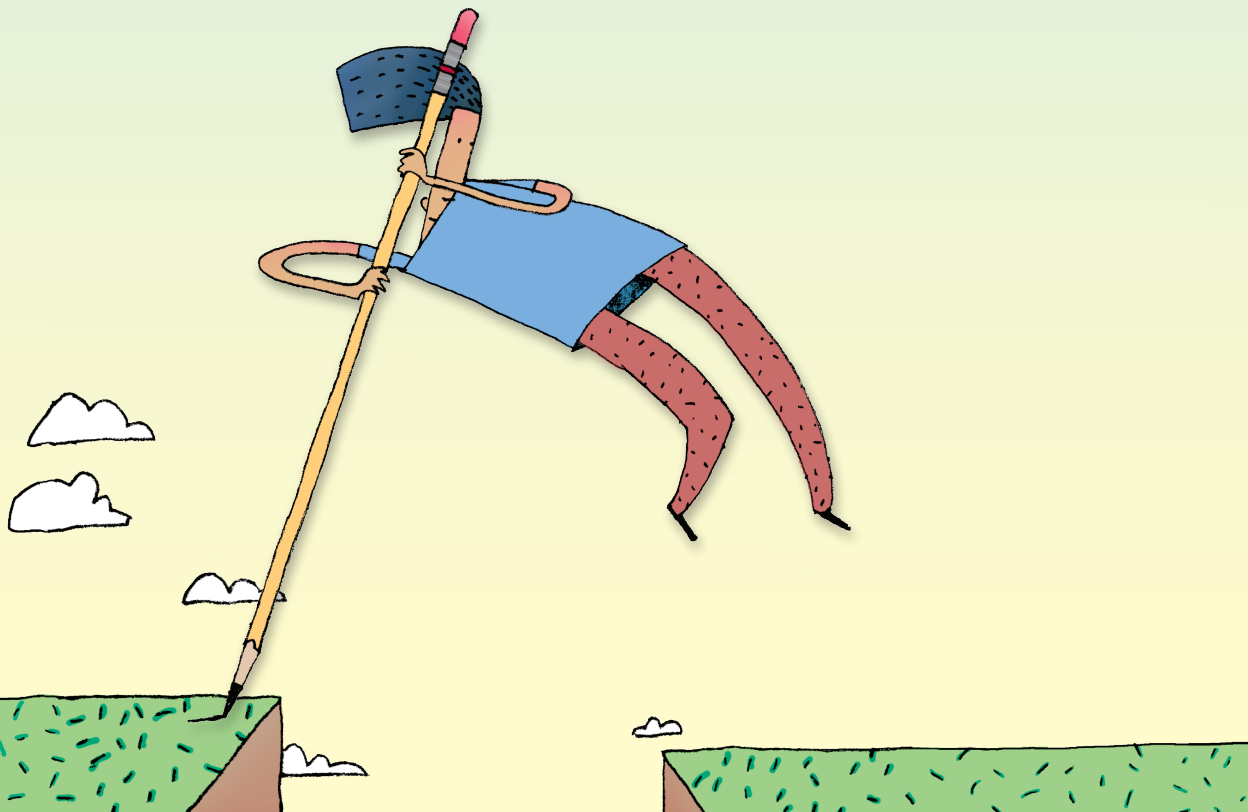


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Write for Business

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Why *Write for the Job*?

Strong writing provides opportunities. It opens doors and lands interviews. It connects you to hundreds of employers and thousands of jobs. With these pages, you can write for the job, creating résumés and letters that exhibit the **seven traits of effective writing** shown in the box below.

The Seven Traits of Effective Writing

1. Clear ideas tell employers who you are and what you can do.
2. Logical organization helps employers find the information they need.
3. Appropriate voice makes your writing positive, professional, and personable.
4. Precise words connect to job requirements and search engines.
5. Smooth sentences communicate your information with style.
6. Correctness ensures that your documents are professional and trustworthy.
7. Polished design impresses employers and lands jobs.

Though seven traits may seem like a lot to keep in mind, you don't have to think about all seven at once. Instead, you'll focus on different traits at different times as you work through the process of creating your résumé and cover letter.

Creating Your Résumé and Cover Letter

Plan → Draft → Revise → Edit → Publish

- **Plan** by gathering details about your skills and experience (traits 1–2).
- **Draft** a document, organizing the details (traits 1–3).
- **Revise**, making large-scale improvements (traits 1–5).
- **Edit**, focusing on punctuation, capitalization, spelling, usage, and grammar (trait 6).
- **Publish** the documents by finalizing design (trait 7) and submitting them to potential employers.

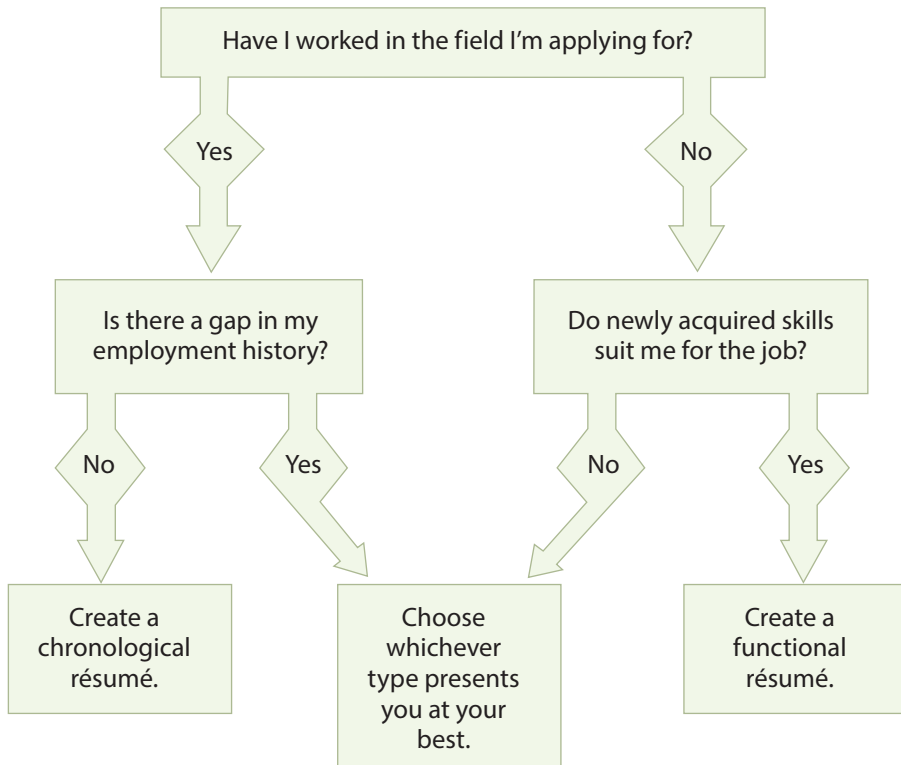
Using *Write for the Job*, you'll make your best impression—on paper, online, and in person!

Types of Résumés

There are two basic types of résumés:

- **Chronological résumés** highlight work history.
- **Functional résumés** emphasize job skills.

The following flowchart can help you decide which type of résumé is right for you.



[tips]

- Trace through the flowchart above to decide which type of résumé you would like to create.
- Review the résumés on the next pages.
- Seek model résumés from your field. (The Internet is a good source.)
- Place your strongest qualifying information (experience or education) first.
- Avoid first-person pronouns (*I, me, my*).

Guidelines for Résumés

1. **Plan:** Gather and organize ideas (traits 1–2).

Ideas and Organization:

- ☐ Decide on a chronological or a functional résumé.
- ☐ Write down your objective (the job you are applying for).
- ☐ List experience and skills that prepare you for the job.
- ☐ List education and awards you have received.
- ☐ Think about what the employer wants in an employee.

2. **Draft:** Organize ideas using an effective voice (traits 1–3).

Ideas, Organization, and Voice:

- ☐ **Opening:** Provide name, contact info, and objective.
- ☐ **Middle:** Provide experience, skills, education, and awards.
- ☐ **Closing:** Offer references.

3. **Revise:** Check the major traits of your writing (traits 1–5).

- ☐ **Ideas:** Is your objective clear? Do you show you are qualified?
- ☐ **Organization:** Is your structure effective and correct?
- ☐ **Voice:** Is your voice natural and concise?
- ☐ **Word Choice:** Do you use specific dates, names, and titles?
- ☐ **Sentence Fluency:** Are your lists parallel?

4. **Edit:** Check for correct copy (trait 6).

Correct Copy:

- ☐ Have you correctly punctuated and capitalized each element?
- ☐ Have you double-checked spelling, especially of names?
- ☐ Have you treated dates and other numbers consistently?

5. **Publish:** Polish the presentation (trait 7).

Design:

- ☐ Have you used appropriate fonts and formatting?
- ☐ Have you used high-quality paper for a printed résumé?
- ☐ Have you saved your electronic résumé in a format indicated by the employer?

Chronological Résumé

Opening

Present contact information.

LLOYD A. CLARK
1913 Linden Street
Charlotte, NC 28205-5611
(704) 555-2422
lloydac@erthlk.net

State your employment objective.

Employment Objective:

Law enforcement position that calls for technical skills, military experience, self-discipline, reliability, and people skills

Middle

List experience, skills, and training (most recent first).

Keep phrases and clauses parallel.

Work Experience:

Positions held in the United States Marine Corps:

- Guard Supervisor—Sasebo Naval Base, Japan, 2015–2019
Scheduled and supervised 24 guards.
- Marksmanship Instructor—Sasebo Naval Base, Japan, 2014–2015

Skills and Qualifications:

- Working knowledge of laws and regulations concerning apprehension, search and seizure, and rules of evidence
- Knowledge of security-management principles, training methods, and countermeasures
- Physical-training management and marksmanship
- Communication abilities and excellent one-on-one skills

Include key words from job advertisements.

Education:

- Apprehension and Riot Control Course, Japan, 2014
- Marksmanship Instructor Course, Okinawa, Japan, 2013
- Associate Degree, Police Science, Gateway Technical College, Elkhorn, WI, 2012

List most recent education first.

Include awards and honors if appropriate.

Awards and Honors:

- Promoted meritoriously from Private (E-1) to Lance Corporal (E-3); promoted meritoriously to final rank of Corporal (E-4) in less than 2 years.
- Achieved “Expert” rating for pistol at annual marksmanship qualifications (3 years).

Closing

Offer references (optional).

References available upon request.

Functional Résumé

Opening

Present contact information and your employment objective.

Middle

Explain skills by referring to educational and work experience.

List the most important skills first.

Use “telegraphic style,” leaving out “I” in each sentence.

Decide whether to feature education or experience first.

Closing

Provide job experience.

MICHELLE MOORE

3448 Skyway Drive

Missoula, MT 59801-2883

(406) 555-2166

Email: mimoore312@yahoo.com

Job Objective: Electrical Engineer—designing or developing digital and/or microprocessor systems.

Qualifications:

Design

- Wrote two “C” programs to increase lab efficiency.
- Built, tested, and modified prototypes in digital and analog circuit design.
- Designed and worked with CMOS components.
- Wrote code for specific set of requirements.
- Helped implement “bed-of-nails” test.

Troubleshooting and Repair

- Repaired circuit boards of peripheral computer products.
- Helped maintain equipment using circuit-board testing.
- Improved quality by correcting recurring problems.
- Debugged 8085 Microprocessor Trainer Kits.

Management

- Trained and supervised production technicians.
- Facilitated smooth operation of production lab.
- Assisted in lab teaching for Microprocessors and Digital Circuits class.

Education: Montana State University, Bozeman, MT

- Bachelor of Science in Engineering, 2017
- Major: Electrical Engineering
- Independent Study: C programming, DOS and BIOS

Experience:

- | | |
|--------------|--|
| 2019-Present | Production Engineer, Big Sky Computer Products, Inc., Missoula, MT |
| 2018-Present | Engineer, Western Labs, Missoula, MT |
| 2017-Present | Engineering Assistant Montana State U |
| 2016-Present | Engineering Intern Montana State U. |

Preparing an E-Résumé

Whether you create a chronological or functional résumé, you should make it available in both paper and digital form. Large companies collect e-résumés into databases and use search engines to discover potential candidates. Smaller companies often search online résumé banks.

Keywords

Since e-résumés are selected by search engines, it's crucial that your résumé includes keywords that employers will look for—words related to degrees, job skills, experience, computer skills, and even your location. To gather keywords, first scan job listings and write down important nouns. Then brainstorm to expand your list of keywords.

Job Posting Keywords	Law Enforcement Keywords		
law enforcement	military	apprehension	evidence
police science	Marine	marksman	riot control
security management	instructor	marksmanship	database
self-discipline	supervisor	search	
documentation	arrest	seizure	

Submitting Electronically

Sometimes, when you submit an electronic résumé, you'll provide it as a PDF (portable document format). This format allows your résumé to be viewed by anyone who has the free Adobe Reader, and it lets you control fonts, graphics, and page layout.

At other times, you need to copy and paste portions of your résumé into an online form. As a result, you can't rely on fancy fonts or even bold and italic where you want it. Then you need to create a résumé that works even without these design flourishes. See the next page for suggestions.

[tips]

- Many employers request a specific type of file. Be sure to follow those directions to avoid having your résumé discarded.
- After time for review, check back with the employer to restate your interest. Use email or the form preferred by the employer. But don't be a pest.

E-Résumé

Format as follows:

- one column
- asterisks as bullets
- simple typeface (such as Arial or Calibri)
- flush left margin
- no italics, boldface, or underlining

List skills, experiences, and education, using key words that the employer's scanner will identify.

This version with basic formatting lets you copy and paste material into an online job site without risking strange codes or dropped copy.

LLOYD A. CLARK
1913 Linden Street
Charlotte, NC 28205-5611
(704) 555-2422
lloydac@erthlk.net

EMPLOYMENT OBJECTIVE

Law enforcement position that calls for technical skills, military experience, self-discipline, reliability, and people skills

WORK EXPERIENCE

Positions held in the United States Marine Corps:

- * Guard Supervisor—Sasebo Naval Base, Japan, 2015–2019
Scheduled and supervised 24 guards.
- * Marksmanship Instructor—Sasebo Naval Base, Japan, 2014–2015

SKILLS AND QUALIFICATIONS

- * Working knowledge of laws and regulations concerning apprehension, search and seizure, and rules of evidence
- * Knowledge of security-management principles, training methods, and countermeasures
- * Physical-training management and marksmanship
- * Communication abilities and excellent one-on-one skills

EDUCATION

- * Apprehension and Riot Control Course, Japan, 2014
- * Marksmanship Instructor Course, Okinawa, Japan, 2013
- * Associate Degree, Police Science, Gateway Technical College, Elkhorn, WI, 2012

AWARDS AND HONORS

- * Promoted meritoriously from Private (E-1) to Lance Corporal (E-3); promoted meritoriously to final rank of Corporal (E-4) in less than 2 years.
- * Achieved “Expert” rating for pistol at annual marksmanship qualifications (3 years).

References available upon request.

Designing Your Résumé

Your future employer's first impression of you may be your résumé, so take care with its appearance. Use the following checklist to ensure a strong design. When you can answer “yes” to an item, check it off.

Design Checklist

Accuracy

- ☐ The document does **not** display the title “Résumé.”
- ☐ Items appear in parallel form and format.
- ☐ Someone employed in the field has reviewed and approved the résumé.
- ☐ The résumé has been proofread multiple times and is error free.

Typography

- ☐ **Times New Roman** (or another *serif* typeface, with finishes at the ends of the letters) is used for paper documents.
- ☐ **Arial** (or another *sans serif* typeface, with clean letters that have no finishes) is used for electronic documents.
- ☐ Font sizes fall between 11 and 14 points.
- ☐ Section headings appear in boldface or all-capital letters.

Spacing

- ☐ Headings and parallel elements are aligned.
- ☐ Bulleted lists make items easy to scan.
- ☐ Sufficient white space makes the résumé easy to read.

Paper

- ☐ High-quality white or light-colored 8 ½ × 11 inch paper is used.
- ☐ Paper is slightly heavier than normal grade.
- ☐ Printing appears on only one side of the paper.
- ☐ The paper is not folded but placed in a 9 × 12 inch envelope.
- ☐ Electronic résumés contain no graphics, and paper résumés include graphics only if the employment situation allows.

Guidelines for Cover Letters

1. **Plan:** Gather and organize ideas (traits 1–2).

Ideas and Organization:

- ☐ Research the job: the job description, the company description, the employer's needs, and the job start date.
- ☐ List your qualifications and ways you meet the need.
- ☐ Find out the name of the person who will read the letter.

2. **Draft:** Organize ideas using an effective voice (traits 1–3).

Ideas, Organization, and Voice: Follow the letter format.

- ☐ **Opening:** Greet the reader, name the job you are applying for, tell how you found out about the job, and express interest.
- ☐ **Middle:** Highlight several qualifications from your résumé and show how they meet the employer's needs.
- ☐ **Closing:** Share contact information and request an interview.

3. **Revise:** Check the major traits of your writing (traits 1–5).

- ☐ **Ideas:** Do you name the job and list your qualifications?
- ☐ **Organization:** Do you follow correct business-letter format?
- ☐ **Voice:** Is your voice natural and confident (but not arrogant)?
- ☐ **Word Choice:** Do you use specific nouns and active verbs?
- ☐ **Sentence Fluency:** Do your sentences read smoothly?

4. **Edit:** Check for correct copy (trait 6).

Correct Copy:

- ☐ Have you correctly punctuated and capitalized each element?
- ☐ Have you double-checked all spelling, especially of names?

5. **Publish:** Polish the presentation (trait 7).

Design:

- ☐ Have you used appropriate fonts and formatting?
- ☐ Have you printed your paper cover letter on high-quality paper?
- ☐ Have you submitted your electronic cover letter in the employer's indicated format?

Cover Letter

Opening

Name the job and where you learned about it. Then introduce your qualifications.

128 35th Street
Lake City, WA 98125
November 18, 2019

Ms. Marla Tamor
Human Resources Director
Evergreen Medical Center
812 University Street
Seattle, WA 98105

Dear Ms. Tamor:

In response to your advertisement in the *Seattle Times* on November 13, I am writing to apply for the medical assistant position. For the past three years, I have worked as a medical assistant for the Johnson Professional Group in Tacoma, Washington.

Middle

List specific training, experience, and skills.

With my Associate's Degree in medical assisting, I have taken courses in both medical and office skills. In my present job, I deal with many patients each day, taking pulses, measuring blood pressure, explaining procedures, drawing blood, and changing dressings. I am AAMA certified.

Closing

Invite follow-up, provide contact information, and close politely.

My enclosed résumé further details my qualifications. I would be available for an interview at your convenience. You may call me at 206-555-3392, or you may send me an email message at clcma@earthconnect.com.

Sincerely,

Claire Connor

Claire Connor

Enclosure: résumé

[tip]

Use the same basic design for your cover letter that you did for your résumé, matching typography, spacing, printing, and paper.

Guidelines for Interviewing

1. *Before the Interview:* Research the job and employer.

- ☐ Write down the training, skills, and experience required.
- ☐ Consider your qualifications and prepare answers for any weak spots.
- ☐ Gather as much information as possible about the employer.
- ☐ Think about the employer's needs and how you can meet them.
- ☐ Write down questions the employer may ask; compose answers.
- ☐ Write down questions you would like to ask the employer.
- ☐ Gather materials: résumé, cover letter, portfolio, and so forth.
- ☐ Select conservative, professional clothing.

2. *During the Interview:* Be personable and professional.

- ☐ Arrive at least 10 minutes early.
- ☐ Be honest and be yourself.
- ☐ Greet the interviewer warmly, make eye contact, shake hands, and smile.
- ☐ Listen to questions carefully and answer clearly.
- ☐ Ask for clarification when necessary.

3. *After the Interview:* Provide professional follow-up.

- ☐ Thank the interviewer for the opportunity to meet.
- ☐ Say you hope to be hired for the position.
- ☐ Share information about where and when you can be reached.
- ☐ Write a thank-you letter. (See page 14.)
- ☐ Review your résumé and cover letter based on what you learned.
- ☐ Continue submitting your résumé to other employers.

[tip]

Be honest about your abilities. If asked about a weakness, express a related strength and mention personal growth. ("I am by nature more careful than speedy but have learned to recognize when a task requires quick action.")

Writing a Post-Interview Thank You

After you interview for a job, it is a professional courtesy to follow up with a thank-you email or letter. Besides expressing appreciation, this correspondence reintroduces you to the interviewer. It should contain the following:

- a thank-you comment
- a statement confirming your interest in the job and your value as an employee, with specific reference to the interview
- a statement about your willingness to answer further questions
- your contact information

Thank-You

Opening

Open with a thank-you comment.

Dear Ms. Villanueva:

Thank you for the interview yesterday. I enjoyed meeting you and the obstetrics nurses at Del Rio Hospital.

Middle

Confirm your interest in the job.

I would enjoy contributing to the important work that you and other staff members do in this community. After touring your impressive obstetrics unit, I'm convinced that my recently completed internship at the neonatal unit of El Paso General would make me an asset to your team.

Closing

Provide follow-up information.

I appreciate being considered for the position of OB nurse. If you have further questions, I am available at 823-555-9667 from 8:00 to 10:00 weekday mornings, or you may leave a message any time after that. I can also be reached by email at jackwdelaney@gmail.com.

Yours sincerely,

Jack Delaney

Jack Delaney

Writing a Job-Acceptance

Once you receive a desirable job offer—whether it is written or oral—you should write a formal job-acceptance email or letter. Such a reply clearly records your understanding of the job. Direct and brief, an acceptance should contain the following:

- the actual acceptance, precisely stated
- clarification of details about wage or salary, starting date, and business to take care of before the starting date
- a closing statement indicating that you look forward to starting work

Job-Acceptance

Opening
State your acceptance.

Dear Ms. Villanueva:

I am pleased to accept the position of registered nurse in the obstetrics unit of Del Rio Hospital, at the salary of \$45,500.

Middle
Clarify the necessary details.

As we discussed on the phone, a starting date of March 17 works well for me. Before then, I will complete the forms you sent and return them. I will also forward my R.N. certification next week after Lone Star Technical College processes it.

Closing
Make a statement about the future.

I'm looking forward to caring for the patients of Del Rio.

Yours sincerely,

Jack Delaney

Jack Delaney

Writing to Decline a Job

Going through a formal application process and interview doesn't mean the job is right for you. Maybe the pay is too low, the benefits inadequate, the location undesirable, or the work not what you expected. Perhaps you have received another offer and plan to accept it. A formal email or letter—usually a follow-up to a phone call that notifies the employer of your decision—is the professional way to turn down a job.

As soon as you've made your decision to decline the job offer, you should send your courteous, concise message.

Job-Declining Message

Opening

Politely turn down the offer.

Dear Ms. Villanueva:

Thank you for offering me the registered nurse position at Del Rio Hospital. After carefully considering my options, however, I regret that I must decline the offer.

Middle

Avoid specifics about your alternatives.

While Del Rio's obstetrics unit presents a challenging, exciting work opportunity, I have decided to accept a position that better suits my particular career goals.

Closing

Be polite. You may cross paths in the future.

I was honored by this job offer and greatly appreciate your kind attention throughout the interview process. I know that through people like you, Del Rio will continue to make a valuable contribution to the community it serves.

Best regards,

Jack Delaney

Jack Delaney

Letter Formats

128 35th Street
Lake City, WA 98125
November 18, 2019

Ms. Marla Tamor
Human Resources Director
Evergreen Medical Center
812 University Street
Seattle, WA 98105

Dear Ms. Tamor:

In response to your advertisement in the *Seattle Times* on November 13, I am writing to apply for the medical assistant position. For the past three years, I have worked as a medical assistant for the Johnson Professional Group in Tacoma, Washington.

With my Associate's Degree in medical assisting, I have taken courses in both medical and office areas. In my present job, I deal with many patients each day, taking pulses, measuring blood pressure, explaining procedures, drawing blood, and changing dressings. I am AAMA certified.

My enclosed résumé further details my qualifications. I would be available for an interview at your convenience. You may call me at 206-555-3392, or you may send me an email message at clcma@earthconnect.com.

Sincerely,

Claire Connor

Claire Connor

Enclosure: Résumé

Full block aligns all parts flush left.

This format is easy and works for electronic submissions but may appear unbalanced or untraditional.

[tip]

For proper envelope format, visit the United States Postal Service Web site at www.usps.com/shipping/letters.htm.

Semiblock aligns the sender's address, date line, complimentary closing, and signature block on a vertical line at the center of the page; all other parts are flush left.

This format is preferred for more conservative applications.

128 35th Street
Lake City, WA 98125
November 18, 2019

Ms. Marla Tamor
Human Resources Director
Evergreen Medical Center
812 University Street
Seattle, WA 98105

Dear Ms. Tamor:

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Enclosure: Résumé