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Cover Letters, Thank-You Letters & References

Job Seekers of Montclair

- **Designing effective "cover letters"**
 - Keep the cover message "short and sweet" and informal, and use it to provoke interest in reading the resume and lead to an interview.
 - Try not to be too formal, nor be too detailed, nor repeat a lot of the same information from your resume.
 - Emphasize that "**I can do X**" and "**I would be valuable to [Company X] because ...**" reflecting that you've done some "homework" on them, and use those lead-ins at the interview.
 - Be very selective and ONLY refer to specific points in your resume that relate to the position you're interested in ... "As you can see in my attached resume, I have demonstrated experience in ...".
 - Send the cover letter to a *specific person* (NOT Dear Sir/Madam).
 - **Exactly 2 or 3 days after** they'd get the cover letter, contact them to make sure that they received it, and then ask "When can I expect to hear from you?" ... this will *not* annoy them.

- **Thank-you letters and their place**
 - Email follow up is acceptable and expected, but handwritten "Thank You's" get noticed. It is the personal touch, so try it!
 - Buy some "Thank You" notes ... and use them!
 - E-cards are okay in many situations today, just be professional.

- **Telephone etiquette and effective use**
 - Know how to contact people in **all** professional media: phone, email, texts, LinkedIn, Tweets, snailmail. Careful with social media!
 - Don't hesitate to phone people ... but plan the call first.
 - When someone answers, certainly say "Hello," ... but then do **NOT** say "My name is ..." – *since they'll forget immediately*. Instead, say something to lock them in to you, e.g., "Karen Smith suggested I call you," or "I'm calling about the position in the *Star-Ledger*." Only THEN say your name, slowly and clearly, even spell it out.
 - Since you'll frequently go right to voicemail, prepare and leave a substantive message (not just "Please return my call.") Speak SLOWLY and CLEARLY, and repeat your phone number.

- **References** – *pre-clear* at least one business and one personal reference.

Remember: You're the most important person in your job search!