



APPLICANT REJECTION LETTER & GUIDE

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Sample Applicant Rejection Letter

1. Overview

Your business spends a lot of time attracting the right applicants for open job positions. It should spend some time contacting those individuals after a decision has been made, even if the application is rejected. A polite and considerate rejection letter can prevent tremendous damage to your company's reputation and its ability to attract qualified employees. Use the enclosed letter and guidelines to inform a candidate that he or she will not be working with you, without alienating someone who may later be a colleague, peer, or customer.

If you follow the suggestions provided, your company will show consideration for its applicants, establishing a tone of mutual respect and laying the foundation for potential future business relationships. Inappropriate behavior, whether by thoughtless letters or ignored applications, will only hurt your business. A well-constructed rejection letter will allow you to continue to attract candidates and customers, and will maintain your business' marketplace reputation. In the end, you know your business better than anyone else. Feel free to adapt the enclosed document to meet your specific needs.

2. Dos & Don'ts Checklist

- Everybody is familiar with the principal that criticism should be tempered with (and preceded by) positive statements. This may be difficult in the context of a rejection, but consider including a gracious note (e.g., "It was a pleasure meeting you last Monday.").
- Try to avoid negative language (e.g., "unfortunately" or "we are sorry"), which can make your letter sound discouraging. Emphasize that there were many applications and that he or she was simply not right for this position.
- Every applicant deserves the courtesy of a response from your organization, and this reply should be professional and polite. Job searches are daunting and exhausting, and a simple phone call or letter can provide clarity and certainty. This will reflect well on both you and your company. Rejected applicants are potential colleagues and customers and may remember your courtesy down the road.
- Send a rejection letter as soon as possible after your decision is made. Candidates may become angry or disgruntled if they don't hear from you, and such individuals are more likely to consider legal action. A simple letter may defuse a situation before it costs you considerable time and money. Consider contacting applicants within two weeks of an interview even if a decision has not yet been made. Explain that you are still reviewing applications and that your determination is not yet final.
- For each open position, consider designating one person in your office responsible for correspondence relating to offers and rejections. Spreading the responsibility among many different people makes it less likely that there will be uniformity and that the task will be completed.
- If your company has procedures governing applicant rejections, be sure to follow those exactly. Consider drafting such procedures if you don't have already have them. Maintaining and following a uniform policy can protect you against later allegations that you are treating some applicants different than others.

3. Applicant Rejection Letter Instructions

The following instructions will provide some notes about the terms of your letter. Review the entire document before starting your revisions.

- If the job has not already been taken, delete the sentence that states that it has.
- Choose your language carefully. Note that the enclosed document states that another person more “closely fits” the requirements of the position. Avoid more specific language – e.g., “better qualified” – which may leave you open to lawsuits if it is not the case. Use more ambiguous language that can’t be so easily challenged.
- An optional sentence is included about keeping the applicant’s information on file for future positions. If this is true for your situation, keep this sentence and add an appropriate time frame. If this is not true for you, delete this sentence.
- You are not required to say why you are not accepting an individual’s job application. In fact, in most cases, it’s best to provide as little information as possible. If you feel compelled to provide an explanation (for example, if you feel it is necessary because someone has gone through multiple interviews), be factual, specific, and brief.

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Form Sample

4. Sample Applicant Rejection Letter

COMPANY LETTERHEAD INFORMATION

[Date]

[Applicant/Employee]

[Address]

[City, State, Zip]

Dear [Applicant/Employee]

Thank you for your application for [employment/promotion/other] with [Company Name]. We enjoyed meeting with you last _____, and your [credentials][accomplishments] are quite impressive.

We have reviewed your background and experience, and although your qualifications are excellent, we have decided that another candidate more closely fits the position's requirements. [(Optional) We will keep your application and resume on file for _____ months, and will contact you if an appropriate position arises.]

We appreciate your interest in [Company Name] and wish you good luck.

Sincerely,