

# A letter of application

## 1 Applying for a job

- a) Peter Hogarth from New York is fresh out of high school and has a great personality. He's the most popular waiter at the diner he works at, where he is saving money to go to college; everybody likes him. However, if he worked at an expensive restaurant, he could earn better tips. Read the ad that Peter found in the New York Times this morning (Nov. 3, 2009).

### The Sky Club

Our stylish restaurant and lounge in New York's trendy Tribeca district is now accepting applications for an experienced, friendly and self-confident waiter who knows what first-class service is and how our first-class clientele would want to be treated.

If you are interested, please send your application to:  
Ryan Price, 257 Washington Street, New York City,  
NY 10013



- b) Peter has experience in the restaurant business, and he also thinks he's friendly and self-confident. He decides to apply for the job. Unfortunately, the letter he sends to 'The Sky Club' restaurant is definitely not a model letter. Read that letter, on the right.

The Sky Club  
257 Washington Street  
NY, NY 10013

Peter Hogarth  
101 Ascan Avenue  
NY, NY 11211

Hi Mr. Price,

My name is Peter. I am looking for a new restaurant job. Right now, I wait tables at a diner here in my neighborhood. It's great, but I need to make more money (for college later), so I want to work at a better restaurant. You're restaurant sounds pretty fancy, so maybe I could be a waiter there.

I would be very happy to come in for an interview. But because I am very busy, I only have time for interviews on Mondays from 9:00 am – 11:00 am or Fridays from 5:00 pm – 7:00 pm. I hope that won't be a problem for you, but I don't think it will be as you're restaurant is open from 8:00 am – 11:00 pm anyway.

At my interview, it would be very nice to discuss not only my hourly wage, but also my vacation days. I love to travel and meet new people, so I will need to know when I can go on vacation, and for how long. I always make lots of new friends on vacation, and I'm also a popular waiter at my diner. So I think I have the right background for a job at your restaurant.

I am looking forward to talking to you and hope to hear from you as soon as possible.

Peter

## 2 Your help is needed!

a) With a partner, go over the letter again and note down what mistakes Peter made. Consider these points as you analyze the letter:

- **Language register**  
→ Remember what you learnt about 'the right language for the right situation' last year in GL4, p. 88? Check to see if Peter's letter is formal enough for a future employer.
- **Structure of letter**  
→ Is everything there that should be there? Have another look at GL5, p.33.
- **Spelling**  
→ Yes, even native speakers of English make spelling mistakes – sometimes very basic ones! Have a close look at Peter's spelling. For many employers, even just one spelling mistake is reason enough to throw an application away.
- **Making the best possible impression**  
→ Has Peter made a good impression? Has he 'sold' himself well enough so that the restaurant will want to 'buy' him? Or has he not worked hard enough to sell himself?

b) **Homework:** With your partner, rewrite the letter the way you think it should have been, based on your notes above. Present it to the class (e.g. on a whiteboard or via a projector), showing what you changed and why. What things did the other pairs do the same as you? What things were totally different?

c) As a final task, compare the different letters in your class with the **model letter** you see below. How close were you to that letter? (*Note:* Don't worry if your letter isn't just like the model letter, or uses words you wouldn't have used; it is only meant to be an example to compare your letter with. You might have found other ways of expressing the main ideas which were just as effective!) The **key** you see after the model letter explains what was wrong with Peter's original letter.

The Sky Club  
257 Washington Street  
NY, NY 10013

Peter Hogarth  
101 Ascan Avenue  
NY, NY 11211

November 3, 2009<sup>1</sup>

Your *New York Times* ad of November 3, 2009<sup>2</sup>

Dear Mr. Price,<sup>3</sup>

I am writing to apply for the job as waiter you advertised in today's *New York Times*.<sup>4</sup>

My current waiting job, which I have had since I was in high school, has been very good in giving me basic restaurant experience and the skills necessary for dealing with people and for working under pressure.<sup>5</sup> Now I am looking for an opportunity to develop my skills in a new environment, and a very good restaurant like yours would be a challenge for me, which is exactly what I am looking for. The restaurant I currently work for is a relatively simple restaurant and not at the same high level as The Sky Club. But I am popular with the customers and with my colleagues, and I think my friendliness could help me in showing your high-class clientele top-level service they expect.<sup>6</sup>

I hope very much that you are interested enough to invite me in for an interview, and I could be very flexible about fixing an appointment.<sup>7</sup>

Thank you for taking the time to read this application. I look forward to hearing from you soon.<sup>8</sup>

Yours sincerely,<sup>9</sup>

Peter Hogarth<sup>10</sup>  
Encl. résumé<sup>11</sup>

## Key to model letter:

<sup>1</sup> Peter forgot the date in his original letter.

<sup>2</sup> A heading like this was missing in Peter's original letter.

<sup>3</sup> Register problem: 'Hi' is for friends, not for a future employer. Peter should have used 'Dear' in his original letter.

<sup>4</sup> Peter should have mentioned what he is writing about in his very first line; that would have been enough. It wasn't necessary to say "My name is Peter"; that sounds very childish.

<sup>5</sup> In Peter's original letter, he talked about how he wanted a better job to make more money for college; that was a mistake. It was bad taste for Peter to talk about money in a letter; the interview is the place for that. And Peter was only being honest in talking about his college plans; but before he mentioned college, he really should have talked about the restaurant he is trying to get a job at. That is why in the new version of the letter he pays 'The Sky Club' a compliment ("very good restaurant"), saying it would be a challenge for him. He also mentions the fact that he has experience and skills ("working under pressure", etc.). *That* is what an employer wants to hear.

<sup>6</sup> This is a good example of how one can 'sell oneself', i.e. talk about one's good qualities; in America especially, it is perfectly acceptable to talk about one's positive personality. But you mustn't overdo it! And you must always combine it with useful information as you see here, e.g. talking about how Peter would like to show the high-class clientele good service.

<sup>7</sup> In Peter's original letter, it was absolutely unacceptable of him to talk about how he was almost too busy for an interview appointment; he showed zero flexibility. And even worse: He talked about vacation schedules! That is the *last* thing an employer wants to hear about in a letter of application. (And in the original letter he even said, "At my interview ...", which makes it sounds like Peter was definitely going to have an interview, but it of course is not *his* decision to make; it's Mr. Price's.)

<sup>8</sup> In his original letter, Peter didn't thank Mr. Price for anything, e.g. for taking the time to read his application.

<sup>9</sup> Register problem: Peter forgot to end his original letter with a closing like 'Yours sincerely' or 'Sincerely yours'. Leaving it out was much too informal.

<sup>10</sup> Register problem: Peter should have ended his original letter more formally, i.e. with his first *and* last name.

<sup>11</sup> Peter didn't mention a résumé in his original letter, but he should have. ('Résumé' is the American word for 'CV'.)

### Spelling mistakes in Peter's original letter:

1. The apostrophe was missing in *won't*.
2. The word *you're* should have been the possessive pronoun *your*; Peter made this mistake three times.
3. It should have been *hope to hear*, not *hope to here*.