
Cover Letter

The cover letter is your chance to make an impression—it is, in fact, a sales letter. The cover letter gives you a chance to explain your CV by focusing, amplifying, and distilling points various points. Your audience will examine your cover letter as a sample of your writing ability, so create your cover letter as carefully and with as much purpose as you would write any potentially career-shattering piece of work.

Follow the correct formatting requirements for writing a business letter. You can find the information by following the path: Walton College Writing Center web site, Resources, Business Form, Written Communication, and Format of Business Letter. .

When you respond to a job advertisement, you should analyze the advertisement and make the ad your guide for writing your cover letter; if the ad mentions that the employer is a research minded university, do focus your cover letter to discuss your research. Remember that the cover letter is meant to complement your vita but not to parrot it; think in terms of fleshing out your CV. The cover letter should be no more than two pages long). Before you write the cover letter, visit the hiring university's web site and examine the faculty research areas; try to find a connection between you and the university and between you and the faculty. If you find a connection between the faculty and a colleague at your present college, ask your colleague if you can name-drop.

- The cover letter is your chance to make an impression; it is, in fact, a sales letter
- The cover letter gives you a chance to focus, amplify, and distill points in your CV
- The cover letter demonstrates for your audience your writing ability. So, create your cover letter as carefully and with as much purpose as you would if you were writing any other important career shattering piece of work.

Writing Your Cover Letter

- Your cover letter will include several sections: *an introduction* that tells your audience who you are and what relationship you want to forge with the institution to which you are applying. *A paragraph that describes and summarizes your dissertation.* *A paragraph that describes your teaching.* *A paragraph in which you mention other research.* The *closing paragraph* is meant to get you an interview and should provide contact information. Express gratitude for the committee members' time and consideration. Each body-content area should include as the topic sentence the portion of the vita that you are going to focus, amplify, or distill
- Develop the paragraph content and pay attention to focus and length
- Write for more than one audience. Remember, there are primary and secondary audience members. Think: who is reading this? Who is on the committee? What type of institution is it? You will get an idea of who is reading by visiting the hiring university's website

Note: Remember that the cover letter introduces interview talking points, so when you write something in your CV, make certain you can explicate it to death in an interview. (Also, when you go on an interview, or if you are doing a phone interview, keep your cover letter that you sent to that institution in front of you with notes.)

Cover Letter Content Areas

Paragraph 1 is the introduction.

- Introduce and connect yourself to the job advertisement.
 1. You begin just as you would if you walked into someone's office: You could start with: *My name is John Doe, and I am writing to apply for the position of ____.* Or you can begin with: *I am writing to apply for the position of ____.*
- Follow-up by describing your present academic status.
 1. *I am currently finishing my dissertation at the University of Arkansas Sam M. Walton College of Business, where I have completed my course work, taken both my written and oral examinations, and have written my dissertation with a defense scheduled on ____.*
- Briefly describe what you have been teaching.
 1. *I have been teaching introductory courses in ____, ____, and ____; however, my area of specialty and research is in ____ and ____.* If someone at your present university has a connection to the university you are applying to, obtain permission from him or her and name drop.

Paragraph 2 briefly describes your dissertation.

- You might start this paragraph with: *My research lies in the area of ____.*
- You could do a brief breakdown of your dissertation: *In the first part or in chapter one, I examine or I analyze....* Make certain that you show where your work is unique and why it is important. Give your projected date of defense and include your committee chair's e-mail, so he or she can confirm that you are on schedule.
- Include a summary of where you are published and how many publications are forthcoming.

Paragraph 3 describes and summarizes your teaching experience.

- Include the standard introductory courses that you have taught but include any that you have developed or improved.
- Provide some examples of ingenious classes that you have developed, techniques you have used to engage students, your teaching persona, and any supplemental tools that you use—videos, internet, blogs, etc.
- Do not talk in broad terms; be specific about each of your supplemental tools, and the types of technology you have used and the results.
- Use framing words such as: *In order to successfully bridge the gap between the difficult abstract ideology____, I offer the students a contextually specific ____.* From this opening, you will explain how the teaching strategy worked, drawing upon positive students' comments. You might follow with: *In addition, I find that using various technologies such as social networking and blogging increases the conversations outside of class that often culminate in increased learning opportunities.* You want to show your audience that you are traditional but also that you are contemporary and can provide a teaching style that matches students' learning styles, using all the technologies that are available to you and the students.

Paragraph 4 includes your research interests and a project you are working on at present.

Paragraph 5 is the closing in which you indicate your availability for interviews, your contact information, and a gracious gratitude for the reader's time and consideration.

After the complimentary closing, include the enclosure notice for documents that you are sending in addition to the letter.

Note: Follow the writing process: outline, draft, revise, redraft, edit, compose final draft, and proofread. Keep your audience members and purpose at the forefront of your mind. Begin each paragraph with a topic idea, and make certain that each sentence that follows helps in the development of the topic idea, that the information is unified, and that the entire paragraph is cohesive. Pay attention to focus and length.

Use framing devices and transitions. Framing devices are those elements in your writing that frame the contents: a topic sentence, for instance, is a framing device, as is chronological succession, or sequential movement. You might use framing devices such as “in chapter one”, “in chapter two”, etc. Transitions, as you recall, are those words that allow you smooth passage from one topic to another. Below is a table with frequently used transitions.

A Few Effective Transitions

Sequence	Time	Comparison	Contrast	Examples	Cause and effect	Concession
again	After a few days	Again	but	even	As a result	Although
also	Earlier	Also	although	For example	consequently	Granted that
and	Lately	In the same way	however	For Instance	Thus	It may appear that
finally	since	Likewise	On the one hand/other hand	To illustrate	To this end	naturally
furthermore	When	similarly	regardless	Indeed	Hence	Of course

There are numerous transitions that are effective for moving from one idea to another. In the future, the writing center will post an exhaustive list of transitions, or you may find a list online. Also, when you read academic articles in your field, notice how the scholars move from one idea to the other and keep a file of effective writing strategies that you might want to try.

Focus on the development of the letter in terms of sentence structure, conservation of words, professional tone, and formal style. Do not begin your letter with something cute that you are using as a means of getting attention or standing out; likewise, do not bore the reader. Describe your projects clearly and precisely and avoid hedging. Don't say, I think, or I hope—be assertive. Write confidently, intelligently, and professionally but avoid bragging. Print your letter on department letterhead. At the end, give all contact information and include a business card attached to the cover letter.