



# COVER LETTERS: Getting started

THE GOAL OF A COVER LETTER is to bridge the facts and experiences on your resume with the position for which you are applying. A strong cover letter should tell the employer *why you are interested in the opportunity (or organization) and how you meet the qualifications they are seeking*. A cover letter is not meant to repeat what can be seen on your resume, but rather to *supplement your resume* by sharing information and detail about what you can offer to an employer. It is also an example of your writing abilities.

## Structuring your letter

A COVER LETTER SHOULD BE no longer than one page. Though the exact number of paragraphs may vary, you should certainly include an opening and closing paragraph, in addition to your body content. You should use business professional format, with your contact information, the date, and the employer's address in the header.

### BUSINESS PROFESSIONAL HEADER FORMAT

Applicant's contact info Line 1  
Applicant's contact info Line 2

Date

Employer's Name, position title  
Company name  
Company address Line 1  
Company address Line 2

## Determining content for your letter

An **OPENING PARAGRAPH** should clearly state the position you are applying for. It is not necessary to give your name, major, or degree in the opening sentence. The employer can see this information from your resume. Instead, jump right in by indicating your **purpose for writing**, your **interest in the position or company**, and a statement explaining your **qualifications**.

The **BODY PARAGRAPHS** are where you should go into detail about your qualifications. Again, do not repeat what is already visible on your resume. Instead, tell them *why* an experience on your resume was significant and its connection to this job or to a qualification the employer indicated in the job description.

Emphasize what you offer to the employer (not what the employer can do for you). You might include stories or examples of your job related skills, specialized training, course work, class projects, or accomplishments from your education, experiences or activities.

A **CLOSING PARAGRAPH** does not need to be long. You may want to include a summarizing statement of your qualifications and interest. Thank the employer and indicate your interest in speaking with them further in an interview. If desired, include information about how you prefer to be contacted.

### ADDITIONAL COVER LETTER TIPS

- > A letter should be tailored for each job (no generic form letters!)
- > Address letters using an individual's name. If no name is given, use "Hiring Manager" or "Recruiter"
- > Write the letter in your own words. Use a conversational style and avoid lengthy, academic sentences.

# COVER LETTERS

## Purpose of a cover letter

The goal of a cover letter is to bridge the experiences on your resume with the position for which you are applying. A strong letter tells the employer *why you are interested* and *how you meet the qualifications*. A cover letter is:

- Not meant to repeat your resume, but to *supplement* it by sharing what you can offer to an employer
- An example of your writing abilities
- Never longer than one page
- Written in business professional format with contact information, the date and the employer's information

## Steps to writing a cover letter

1. Identify the main qualifications the employer is seeking
2. Consider how your education and experiences meet the listed qualifications
3. Present your fit with their position by sharing details about your experience or personal characteristics
4. Emphasize what you offer to the employer (not what the employer can do for you) related to the position
5. Provide specific examples or stories of demonstrated skills and related experience. Within these stories, highlight your job-related skills, specialized training, course work, class projects and/or significant accomplishments

### Special tip:

Consider using the STAR method, *situation - task - action - result*, of storytelling to highlight your experience and strengths to employers. Using this method will highlight your experience (the S and T), describe your actions and skills (the A), and allow you to share what you learned and how it connects to the position (the R).

3826 Beechwood Place  
Seattle, WA 98195

January 17, 2017

Human Resources Dept.  
Automotive Americas, Inc.  
123 State Route 1  
Sunnyville, WA 12345

Dear Automotive Americas Hiring Manager:

I am writing to apply to the "Vehicle Research - Safety/Crash Engineer" position posted on the University of Washington Handshake website. I have been following Automotive Americas' recent innovations in crash safety and engine design for the past three years, and after learning more about your commitment to employee excellence at the UW Infosession hosted by Paul Ellory and Pam Plotsky on January 8th, I believe that my internship experience and leadership experience fit well with this position.

During my six-month internship at Engineering Motor Corporation, I developed all aspects of a hybrid engine prototype, including building and testing prototypes using computer simulation to assess performance and safety. I further deepened my drafting and testing skills as an intern with Home Health Company where I tested fixtures and wrote extensive reports documenting my findings for the design team and I look forward to applying my engineering skills to a comprehensive vehicle research position.

Through my academic projects and club leadership in the UW chapter of the American Society of Mechanical Engineers, I developed strong project management and interpersonal skills. As ASME's president, I managed a six-person team to plan a successful departmental banquet for 300 attendees including local industry leaders and prominent faculty. In academic projects I take the lead in organizing tasks and keeping the group on track throughout the quarter, despite busy schedules and competing priorities.

I look forward to an opportunity to speak with you about my interest joining the Automotive Americas engineering team. Please contact me at (206) 209-1047 or violetAu@uw.edu at your earliest convenience. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,  
Violet Gold

Try to find the name of the recruiter or hiring manager. If not possible, list the department or supervisor's position title. If you still do not know, address the letter to the "Hiring Manager" or "Recruiter"

Note the use of stories to keep the letter interesting, as well as add more information than the employer can see on the resume

Don't be afraid to indicate what you would like next: the opportunity to speak with them further in an interview.

# COVER LETTER EXAMPLES

Rachel Smith, Manager Interaction Design Department  
UX Consultations Inc.  
1500 Pike Ave.  
Seattle, WA 98019

The letter starts by hooking the reader through emphasizing why she is interested in this opportunity with this specific organization.

Dear Ms. Smith:

Whether it's designing layouts for the UW yearbook or making art for my portfolio, I have a personal habit of evaluating empty spaces and thinking about how to allocate content. It was thrilling for me to discover the field of User Experience and Interaction design because I realized I could make a career out of this spatial awareness and design thinking. Through my time as a Human-Centered Design and Engineering student at the UW, I have developed both design and technical skills while pursuing projects, internships and various leadership roles. I am eager to bring these qualifications to the UX Designer position at UX Consultations Inc.

Working my way through school, my various retail positions familiarized me with the customer experience and taught me about purchasing behaviors that consumers bring to their online shopping. This knowledge led me to take on several projects in school where I redesigned an online shopping app. I took that process from ideation to conducting user research, walking through the wireframing and prototyping process, testing the prototypes with potential users, and recommending final design changes. My experience on both the retail and design ends of the process help me bring a new perspective that would be beneficial working with clients on their design projects at UX Consultations Inc.

Everything I have heard about UX Consultations Inc. from former classmates who have gone to work with you, as well as the projects I have seen in your client base, convince me that this is place I want to work and contribute. I am eager to talk with you more about how my skills and interests are a fit with this UX Designer position. I look forward to hearing back from you.

Thank you,  
Maribel Ande

Tom Douglas Restaurant Group  
2030 5th Qve  
Seattle, WA 98121

Dear Hiring Manager:

It is with great enthusiasm that I apply to your open Events Coordinator position that Mike Smith let me know about at the UW Career Fair. In addition to my 4 years of experience in the restaurant industry, I have enormous respect for the Tom Douglas restaurant group. I grew up going to Dahlia Lounge for brunch with my family every weekend, and I believe the creativity of the dishes and quality of service and dining experiences I have had there and at every Tom Douglas restaurant set the standard for the restaurant industry in Seattle. I am an excellent candidate to become the Events Coordinator because of my strong organizational and communication skills developed in the food industry, as well as my event planning experience where I gained management, multitasking and prioritization skills.

As an example of my event coordination and leadership skills, while working as the president of my registered student organization, History Fellows, I had the idea to organize an alumni networking panel and mixer to draw attention and increase membership of our group. Since it was my idea, I led the project. In our first planning meeting I and the four other officers brainstormed a task list and event timeline. From there I delegated tasks based on the strengths of my team. My main role was to secure a venue, identify panelists, and ensure everyone stayed on target for their individually assigned tasks.

I researched event space on campus and found a great deal that fit our date, time and budget. After six cold call emails I was able to find 4 alumni willing to serve as panelists for our event. Meanwhile, I routinely checked in with other members to make sure they were completing their tasks in a timely manner. The day of the event I called a meeting to go over every aspect of our evening, making sure everyone was clear on their tasks for the night. After acting as the moderator for the panel discussion, audience members and panelists mingled and our event went off without a hitch. The feedback we received from students, faculty, and alumni was all incredibly positive and we increased our membership by thirty percent. It is now an annual gathering in its third year.

Because of the above example, and my background in the service industry I feel well suited for the Events Coordinator position. I am dedicated to the fine dining experience and standards that Tom Douglas restaurants have come to be known for, and I have the organization, communication, and multitasking skills to enhance and enliven your team. I would love to speak to you about my fit for this role. You can reach me by phone at 206.333.4343 or via email at saoki@uw.edu. Thank you.

Sincerely,  
Steven Aoki

Notice how Steven shared an example of his skills in action by using a STAR story. He also connected those skills the position he's applying for.

# BUILD YOUR COVER LETTER

This is an opportunity for you to outline the content you want to include in your cover letter. Use this space for notes and ideas, to get a big picture written down, before you write the full letter on your own computer.

## Header with your name and contact info from your resume

**Today's date:**

**Recruiter name:**

**Recruiter position title:**

**Company name:**

**Company address line 1:**

**Company address line 2:**

**Salutation:** Dear \_\_\_\_\_:

**Opening paragraph:** *What are you applying for? Why are you interested in this opportunity? If you know or spoke to someone at this organization, include that evidence of networking. Why do you think you are a good fit with the position and the qualifications the employer is seeking?*

**Body paragraphs:** *Expand on your qualifications. Highlight examples and indicate stories when you have demonstrated these qualities. Tell them how the experiences you are highlighting are relevant to the position.*

**Closing paragraph:** *Reiterate your interest in the specific company and position. Include a closing summary statement about your fit and interest in the position. Close with a request for action (interview) and a thank you for the consideration.*

**Sign off:**

**Name:**

Business professional format with a header containing your contact information (*may be same header as on your resume*), date, and company information

A cover letter should always be **specific** to a job or company. Address the **core qualifications** you have identified through careful study of the job description. It is usually not possible to address every single quality listed in the job description.