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Creating an Effective Cover Letter

A cover letter is a professional business letter that introduces you to prospective employers and should always be accompanied by a resume. The letter is written in the form of a narrative, providing depth to your resume, highlighting your strongest qualifications, and stressing how you meet the employer’s needs. Cover letters also highlight your written communication skills and provide you with the opportunity to state why you are interested in the position.

The cover letter serves as your first impression; therefore, it must be organized, professional, and 100% error free. Additionally, your cover letter should always be original and tailored to the specific position. When you spend the time crafting a customized letter, you will stand out from the pile of applicants.

Please use this packet as a guide for writing cover letters. It is important that you use your own writing style when writing your cover letter. Your resume and cover letter will complement each other and should be consistent with how you write each document.

Cover Letter Guidelines:

- Use business letter format.
- Cover letters are generally 3-4 paragraphs, no longer than a page.
- Use the same font size/style and header as used for your resume.
- Address the letter to a specific person (call the Human Resources Department if the hiring manager is not listed or research online by reviewing the company website and/or LinkedIn). You may address the letter to “Dear Hiring Manager”, “Dear Human Resources Director” or “To Whom It May Concern” if information is unavailable.
- Do not assume pronouns. Check LinkedIn to see if the contact name has their pronouns listed. When pronouns are not listed, write the full name, “Dear First Name Last Name” (when possible).

Cover Letter Basics:

- Your header should be at the top of your cover letter and it should be consistent with your resume header.
- After your header, on the left side of the page, the date should be listed, followed by two line spaces.
- Following the date, the name and address of the person you are writing to should be listed in block form.

Example:

Your Name

100 Morrissey Blvd. ♦ Boston, MA 02125 ♦ Your Phone Number ♦ Your Email Address

August 7, 202X

Ms. Mary Moore
 Managing Editor
Daily Times
 P.O. Box 89192
 Boston, MA 02205

Dear Ms. Moore:

1st Paragraph:

- The purpose of this paragraph is to introduce yourself and grab the employer's attention. Include a persuasive statement about what makes you the ideal candidate for the position (state your strongest qualifications/most relevant skills).
- Be sure to mention the title of the job/internship or the department you would like to work in.
- List how you learned about the position and if someone referred you.

Example:

Your Name

100 Morrissey Blvd. ♦ Boston, MA 02125 ♦ Your Phone Number ♦ Your Email Address

August 7, 202X

Ms. Mary Moore
Managing Editor
Daily Times
P.O. Box 89192
Boston, MA 02205

Dear Ms. Moore:

I am applying for the journalism internship posted on the *Daily Times* website. I have a strong interest in local politics and my experience writing political articles for the University of Massachusetts Boston's student newspaper coupled with my educational experience provide me with the essential skills needed to be successful as a journalism intern.

2nd Paragraph:

- Your second paragraph serves as your sales pitch to the employer, stating why you should be considered for the job/internship.
- Use this paragraph to elaborate on the skills/ qualifications you mentioned in the opening paragraph—Highlight 2-3 examples that demonstrate your level of expertise of those skills, being sure you identify skills that you think would be of greatest interest to the organization and related them to the employer's needs.
- Your goal is to create an interest in *you* so the reader contacts you to schedule an interview.

3rd and 4th Paragraphs:

- The third paragraph should focus on why you are drawn to the organization. For example, do you connect with their mission statement? Do you want to work with the specific population they serve? Why do you want to work or intern with this employer over other organizations?
- In your closing paragraph, thank the reader for his/her time in reviewing your materials.
- You should also ask for the opportunity for an interview.
- Be sure to include the best way to contact you and if you are mailing your letter remember to sign it.

Please use the cover letter example below as a guide only

- When developing your cover letter, **use your own words and writing style** as this is an example of your written communication skills.
- Your cover letter should be tailored to each position.

Your Name

100 Morrissey Blvd. ♦ Boston, MA 02125 ♦ Your Phone Number ♦ Your Email Address

August 7, 202X

Ms. Mary Moore
Managing Editor
Daily Times
P.O. Box 89192
Boston, MA 02205

Dear Ms. Moore:

I am applying for the journalism internship posted on the *Daily Times* website. I have a strong interest in local politics and my experience writing political articles for the University of Massachusetts Boston's student newspaper coupled with my educational experience provides me with the essential skills needed to be successful as a journalism intern.

As a student at the University of Massachusetts Boston, I have had the opportunity to take courses directly related to writing articles for a newspaper. In my *Writing for Print Media* class, I took on a project writing about the Boston Mayoral Campaign from a student's perspective, which was published on Boston.com. Additionally, I have experience writing for *The Mass Media*, UMass Boston's student newspaper, where I contribute weekly political articles during the semester and have had multiple featured stories. My love of politics along with my passion for writing makes me a strong candidate for the journalism internship with the *Daily Times*.

I am an avid reader of the *Daily Times* and there are many skills and perspectives that I would bring to this internship. It would be an honor to work side-by-side with experienced writers who are constantly recognized for their contributions in journalism. Additionally, knowing that the *Daily Times* readership has to continue to increase, I am excited to have the opportunity to contribute to a successful newspaper where the organization's mission is bringing news that matters to the local Boston community.

I am very interested in this internship and would appreciate the opportunity to interview for this position. Should you have any questions, I can be reached at (insert your phone number) or at (insert your email address). Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,
Your Name

Tips for Success:

- Write personalized, tailored cover letters, making sure to address key points from the position description.
- When avoidable, do not address the letter to "To Whom It May Concern".
- Keep it conversational—show some personality—this type of language makes people feel like you have rapport even if you've never met.
- Don't use weak language (i.e. "I think my experience is a good match" vs. "My experience with social media, particularly using Instagram at my past internship with Hill Holliday, is a great fit for this position.")