A well-written cover letter can often be the difference between getting an interview and getting a rejection letter. You should send one as a part of every job application you submit, unless they specifically request a resume only. While some hiring managers may rely more on the cover letter than others, having a good one is always important; for some recruiters it is the most important part of the application. It is your chance to explain why you are the best fit for the position. Use it!

Header and Address

- Use business letter format. Use the same page header as your resume so the two documents match and so an employer can contact you from the cover letter alone if they lose your resume; include your mailing address, phone number and e-mail address in your header.

- Address your letter to a specific person at the organization, if possible. Carefully review the job description, search the employer’s website, speak with anyone you may know at the organization and try to find the name of the position supervisor or department head. Alternatively, “Dear Hiring Manager” (or “Dear Search Committee” if you know the application is being reviewed by a committee) is appropriate.

First Paragraph

- State clearly who you are and why you are writing. If you are applying for a specific position, state the title of the position and how you learned about the opening. If you are writing a letter of inquiry, describe the type of opportunity in which you are interested.

- Refer to any contact you have had with the organization (e.g. names of people with whom you have spoken).

- Provide a 1-2 sentence summary of the knowledge, skills and experience that you would bring to the position (keep it brief; specifics will come in the next paragraph). Keep the focus here on what you have to offer the employer, not what you hope to gain from the position.

- Describe briefly why you are interested specifically in that employer (e.g. specific programs, clients, corporate values).

Second Paragraph

- Do not restate your résumé! Rather, pick from your résumé the most relevant experiences and skills gained through jobs, internships, courses, extracurricular activities and expand on them with specific examples and details that demonstrate why you are a good match for the job or internship. Do not apologize for lack of experience or focus on what you are looking to gain.

- Make the case that you fit the job description. Include specific evidence that you meet the qualifications stated in the job description and have the required experience, knowledge & skills. DO SOME RESEARCH in advance. Check out the company website, talk to anyone in your network that may work there (or has worked there in the past). Carefully read the job description and identify the things that are the most important to them (in addition to the
“Requirements” or “Experience Needed” type of sections, look at the main body of the description and see what skills and abilities appear the most. If the employer mentions “communication skills” three times in the first two paragraphs you can be sure that is an important skill for the role.

▪ Keep in mind transferable skills (i.e. skills that you developed that would be valuable to any employer. These are typically broad skills like leadership, communication skills, organizational skills, etc.) and talk about how you can apply them to the new role. You don’t need to list every skill you have! Pick the skills you think are most important to them and give specific examples of how you have developed them.

▪ Mirror the language used in the description itself. If the job description seeks someone with “excellent interpersonal skills” use that phrasing rather than saying you are “great with people”.

Conclusion

▪ Thank the reader and reaffirm your interest in the position and organization.

▪ Like the introduction, this is an appropriate place to personalize your letter. Specific knowledge of the organization signals that you are seriously interested in the position.

▪ Focus on the next steps, e.g. request an interview or indicate when you will call for a follow-up conversation. Be assertive; say “I look forward to speaking with you.”

Remember…

▪ Keep your letter to one page.
▪ The font should match your résumé and be within one point résumé font size.
▪ Keep your margins to no less than 0.5 inches – a letter that is too long or too dense runs the risk of not being read!
▪ Be clear, concise and organized.
▪ PROOFREAD! REVISE! Ask others’ opinions; read your letter out loud.
▪ If you are e-mailing a letter and résumé, it is best to send them as attachments.
▪ Remember to sign your letter if you are mailing or faxing it.

Let’s look at some different samples and styles…
Letter of Inquiry
(This type of letter is used for outreach to an organization where you would like to work, but which has not published a specific job/internship description for which you can apply)

Quinn E. Piacke
1234 Bobcat Way
Hamden, CT 06518
Quinn.piacke@quinnipiac.edu
(203) 582-1234

November 28, 2015

Ms. Laurel Bobcat
Executive Director
Old South Meeting House
310 Washington Street
Boston, MA 02108

Dear Ms. Bobcat:

I've visited the Old South Meeting House many times and I learn something new every time I visit. As a sophomore History Major at Quinnipiac University in Hamden, CT, I am interested in the possibility of interning at the Old South Meeting House this summer. I would value any opportunity to shadow a curator, work on a project, or assist with the administrative details of the museum's operation. Based on my background and experience, I offer demonstrated project management, organizational, and administrative skills and a strong interest in the history of colonial and early America.

My role as editor of my Residential Hall’s Facebook requires me to establish goals and priorities and orchestrate the details of a major project. Managing the publications and distribution of over 500 books involves coordinating photo shoots, managing students, collaborating with the Office of Student Affairs to compile student biographical information, and serving as a liaison to the publisher to ensure a timely and smooth process. This past summer, I worked as an office assistant in the Office of Public Affairs at Northeastern University. This position demanded significant multi-tasking and administrative skills. In addition to updating media contact lists and distributing press releases to national media, I provided frontline administrative support for a fast-paced office of fifteen professionals, including fielding phone inquiries, receiving visitors, filing and faxing. The combination of my project management and administrative skills will allow me to contribute to a wide variety of museum projects as well as administrative needs on a daily basis.

A strong interest in colonial and early American history currently shapes my academic pursuits. As a freshman, I took Revolutionary America and am presently enrolled in The Colonial Period of American History. Since I was quite young, I have enjoyed visiting history museums, and was always mesmerized by objects from everyday life in the eighteenth century. Because the Old South Meeting House played such a pivotal role in the events leading up to the American Revolution, as well as in the cultural history of colonial Boston, the museum and its collections are of particular interest to me. I visited the museum last summer and especially enjoyed its use of multi-media to engage visitors and make historic artifacts and events accessible in a modern and familiar context.

I would be delighted to be a part of your team this summer. I am quite flexible as I will be in Boston for the entirety of the summer and am open to either a part-time or full-time position. If you would like to meet with me, I will be in the Boston area from January 2 through January 19. I will call you during the week of December 17 to inquire about the viability of scheduling a short meeting at a time that is convenient for you. In the interim, please do not hesitate to contact me at the number below. Thank you very much for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Quinn E. Piacke
Quinn.piacke@quinnipiac.edu
Quinn E. Piacke  
1234 Bobcat Way  
Hamden, CT 06518  
Quinn.piacke@quinnipiac.edu  
(203) 582-1234

November 28, 2015

Mr. Joe Smith  
Director  
Any Agency  
123 Main Street  
Boston, MA 02108

Dear Mr. Smith:

I'm very interested in your Social Work Intern posting on Quinnipiac University's Career Connections website. Your agency's focus on improving educational opportunities for inner-city youth appeals to my career goals and previous experience gained in pursuit of my Bachelor's degree in Social Services at Quinnipiac University.

My previous experience has been developed both within and outside the classroom. Throughout the past two semesters I have worked with a series of day care facilities in the greater New Haven area through an organization called TYES, which is specifically designed to assist inner-city populations. This experience has given me great exposure to the daily challenges faced by these children and the impact it has on their education. I have also developed a solid background in theory through related courses including Social Problems, Social Welfare and Population & Society. My field experience and academic preparation has fueled the passion in me to continue to pursue Social Work as my career and I have already begun researching graduate programs where I can pursue an MSW degree upon graduation.

I am confident that I have the real-world exposure and academic preparation to be successful in this role. Please review my enclosed resume for additional details about my qualifications and interest. I look forward to the opportunity to meet with you in person to discuss my background and fit for this position. I can be reached at your convenience at the phone number or email listed below. Thank you for your consideration and I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Quinn E. Piacke
February 10, 2015

Ms. Ann McAlister
Human Resources Recruiter
Random House Publishers
1340 Broadway
New York, NY 10000

Dear Ms. McAlister:

I have grown up amidst the words of Margaret Atwood and have savored Bill Bryson's colorful accounts of his adventures in the woods and in the world. The Random House Associates' Program especially appeals to me since, as a soon-to-be college graduate, I would like to have some time to explore various facets of the publishing industry before committing myself to a specific department. Since my intent is to pursue a career in the publishing industry, I would like to work for Random House, which owns many of the smaller publishers, such as Doubleday and Broadway Books, whose books I relish reading.

Eight years of experience in high school and college newspaper journalism have instilled in me a healthy respect for the printed word and for the work that it takes to transform ideas into finished texts. I have the necessary experience, ambition, and love of books to contribute significantly to the world of Random House. My work as an editorial intern at Psychology Today magazine, during which I wrote four nationally published articles, exposed me to the daily routines of magazine journalism. In my amateur newspaper journalism experience I often devoted as many hours a week to my work as I would have committed to a full-time job.

Through my various editorial positions at the Quinnipiac Chronicle I have learned how to thrive under pressure, meet deadlines, communicate with coworkers and business affiliates, function as part of a cohesive team, and conduct effective interviews with professors, students, researchers, and other professionals. These skills coupled with a proficiency in word-processing, internet research, page design, and layout make me particularly well suited to work in the publishing industry.

I am excited about becoming part of the process by which rough drafts travel to bookstore shelves and finally into my own hands. I am confident in my ability to contribute to Random House, and I have enclosed my résumé for your review. I look forward to the opportunity for an interview with you at your convenience. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Quinn E. Piacke
November 28, 2014

Ms. Sally Jones
Manager
ABC Company
123 Main Street
Hamden, CT 06518

Dear Ms. Jones:

As a senior Biology major at Quinnipiac University with previous internship and academic research experience, I believe I am an excellent candidate for the Research Assistant position I recently found on Quinnipiac University’s Career Connections website. I believe I have the right combination of academic preparation and internship experience to make an immediate impact in this role.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Your Requirements</th>
<th>My Qualifications</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Leadership skills</td>
<td>Elected to several officer positions through my involvement with student groups including the Biology Club and Student Government.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Previous research experience</td>
<td>Completed summer research project on effects of hydration on athletic performance in conjunction with faculty member, Dr. Bob Thomas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strong communication and presentation skills</td>
<td>Assisted Dr. Thomas with the preparation and presentation of study results to a group of more than 1,200 researchers at a national conference in Dallas, Texas.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I am confident that I have the real-world exposure and academic preparation to be successful in this role. Please review my enclosed resume for additional details about my qualifications and interest. I look forward to the opportunity to meet with you in person to discuss my background and fit for this position. I can be reached at your convenience at the phone number or email listed below. Thank you for your consideration and I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Quinn E. Piacke