

COVER LETTER GUIDE

A cover letter is a formal business letter that complements your resume by illustrating how your interests & experience relate to the position for which you are applying. It is a primary marketing tool for a job seeker: It is an opportunity for applicants to provide vivid narratives that enhance their application. While some employers do not require a cover letter, we strongly recommend it because it gives the applicant a strategic advantage.

Why write a cover letter?

- **To convince an employer that you are the right candidate for the open position.** Demonstrate an understanding of how your education, interests, and experience fit the job description. Show the employer that you have researched the company and that you want to work there. Express enthusiasm and interest in one or more of the following: the job, the company, or their products/projects!
- **To showcase your communication skills.** Employers want proof that you can communicate effectively in writing. Effective cover letters show your ability to make a thesis statement and support it with descriptive examples. Every job demands clear writing.
- **To demonstrate that you can craft a formal business letter.** You will most likely utilize formal writing skills in some capacity at your future place of employment and you will *certainly* need to follow directions.
NOTE: A specific format is expected and necessary in business letters.

Tips & Tricks

- **Write a unique cover letter for each job application: never use the same cover letter to apply to every job of interest.**
- **Keep a positive tone.** Focus on what you can offer. Do not mention experience or skills you lack. Never cite a negative experience.
- **Be concise, clear, and convincing.** No fluff!
- **Indicate availability.** When writing a cover letter for co-op, **state the semester you are available.** When writing for a full-time job, **state the month you will graduate.**
- **Keep the cover letter to ONE page,** and a maximum of 4 paragraphs.
- **Avoid repetition** of verbs and phrases – use a thesaurus and our *Action Verb handout*.
- **Address key qualifications** and mention specific examples of how you have developed these skills.
 - Consider printing a job description and highlighting key phrases. Use similar language when writing a focused cover letter that is specific to the role and company to which you are applying.
 - Avoid summarizing all of your relevant skills in the cover letter! Prioritize 1 or 2 and write about a strong example of each. The rest of your relevant qualifications should be visible on your resume.
- **Be selective when pulling from your resume:** Only use experience & skills that pertain to the job description.
- **Expect to write several drafts** of a cover letter – your Co-op + Career Advisor can help you!
- **Proofread** to make sure that your letter is error free: review spelling, grammar, punctuation, sentence structure.
- **The heading of the cover letter should match your resume** – they are a pair, not two separate documents.
- **Any letter you send should be signed with a signature.** Create an image file of your signature and insert it into every cover letter.

How to send a cover letter

- Submitting a cover letter depends on how an employer wants to receive application materials. Below are some examples of delivery methods:
 - Upload to an application platform as a PDF or Word document.
 - Save as the second page of the resume -- one document with two pages.
 - Attach to an email as a PDF.
 - Copy and paste the cover letter into the body of an email.

The company contact & their information go here. If you have no name or job title, do research to find them. If you still are missing information, skip the first 1-2 lines.

The headers on your resume & cover letter should match. They are a pair.

Get permission before using someone's name so they will be comfortable and prepared if asked about you.

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Contact's First and Last Name
 Contact's Job Title
 Company Name
 Company Street
 City, State Zip

Date

Dear _____:

Paragraph One: Focus on why you are writing, who you are, and why you are qualified. Your first sentence should state how you found out about the job – a specific website or person. Be sure to state the job title and company name. State why you are writing. Express your interest in the role and the company, and share why you are an excellent match for the position.

Paragraphs Two & Three: Use vivid examples to illustrate that you are a match for the job requirements. Each paragraph should illustrate a specific example of a skill or qualification that matches the needs of the open position. Cite any practical experience that you have obtained (lab or studio work, co-op, research, class projects, etc.). Mention how this experience has enhanced your relevant skills or understanding of a relevant topic. Connect it back to the job description – how did this experience prepare you for the job to which you are applying? Always make the connection very clear.

Paragraph Four: Thank the reader, refer to follow-up, and close out strong. Restate your interest in the position – be very convincing. Remind the reader why you are an excellent match (referring to your opening and body paragraphs above). Provide a phone number. Thank the employer for their time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Insert Signature
 Your First Name and Last Name, Typed

If you cannot find a name, write "Dear Hiring Manager:"

Write the date formally:
August 6, 2020

Create an image file of your hand-written signature and insert into each cover letter.

If you will have no phone access for a while, provide another way to speak (Skype, Google Hangouts, etc.) Email alone is not enough!

Use the 2 middle paragraphs to tell two good stories or examples supporting of your claim in the first paragraph: you are an excellent candidate for the job. Do not list every one of your qualifications. Your resume does that already. If there are additional skills that you wish you could mention in your cover letter, make sure they appear in your resume. An interested reader will look at both documents.