

BEWARE THE T.R.A.P.S.!

Look out for these common mistakes when writing a cover letter or personal statement!

Introductory Paragraph Example

TELLING WITHOUT DEMONSTRATING

Use the STAR (Situation, Task, Actions, Results) method to demonstrate your skills, rather than portraying them in a passive or immaterial way.

Example: "I am confident that I have the knowledge and skills to make a strong contribution to the Geneva Centre for Security Policy."

RESUME SENTENCES

Avoid using valuable cover letter and personal statement space to simply restate what's on your resume without context.

Example: "I am a first year International Studies student at the Josef Korbel School of International Studies."

ACCIDENTAL ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Avoid giving credit to someone or something else. Show intentionality about your decisions and activities.

Example: "My college and graduate courses have given me the opportunity to become a good researcher in the field of security."

PASSIVE VOICE & PREPOSITION OVERUSE

Make passive active! Search your sentences for a form of "to be" (is, are, was, were) + a past-tense verb (was edited, were taken, is sold, was caught) and rearrange to state the actor + past-tense verb only (I edited, I took, They sold, We caught). Also, eliminate **prepositional phrases** to eliminate extra words!

Examples: "...coursework **has been focused on** the study **of** armed conflict **in** Europe and **in** surrounding nations."

SATISFACTION AS A REASON

You'll be hired or awarded a fellowship for what you can do, not because of what you will gain from the experience. Convince the reader of your value (skills, knowledge and abilities).

Example: "It would be a great learning experience for me to work as a Research Assistant for the GCSP."

SPOT THE DIFFERENCE



I am interested in applying for the research assistant position at the Geneva Centre for Security Policy. I am currently an International Security student at the Josef Korbel School of International Studies at the University of Denver where my coursework has been focused on the study of armed conflict in Europe and in surrounding nations. My college and graduate courses have given me the opportunity to become a good researcher in the field of security, and I am confident that I have the knowledge and skills to make a strong contribution to the Geneva Centre for Security Policy. It would be a great learning experience for me to work as a Research Assistant for the GCSP.

I am writing to apply for the Research Assistant position at the Geneva Centre for Security Policy (GCSP). As an International Security student at the Josef Korbel School of International Studies, I utilize many publications from your website for my research papers. I am specifically drawn to the creative and inclusive approach the Centre uses to educate global leaders to solve international problems. Through my academic studies in the U.S. and in Europe, I have developed strong research and analytical skills focused on international security, and am eager to support GCSP's mission of using education and diplomacy to peacefully resolve global security challenges.

SET UP AN APPOINTMENT WITH THE OCPD TO REVIEW YOUR COVER LETTER, RESUME, OR PERSONAL STATEMENT TO LAND THE JOB OR INTERNSHIP OF YOUR DREAMS!

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Body Paragraph Example

TELLING WITHOUT DEMONSTRATING

Use the STAR (Situation, Task, Actions, Results) method to demonstrate your skills, rather than portraying them in a passive or immaterial way.

Example: "I have a lot of experience organizing events for different clients and troubleshooting when problems arise."

RESUME SENTENCES

Avoid using valuable cover letter and personal statement space to simply restate what's on your resume without context.

Example: "I spent 6 months as an Operations and Event Planning Intern at The White House Project and worked in Conference and Event Services at the University of Denver."

ACCIDENTAL ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Avoid giving credit to someone or something else. Show intentionality about your decisions and activities.

Example: "At The White House Project, I was fortunate enough to be able to coordinate numerous events. "

PASSIVE VOICE & PREPOSITION OVERUSE

Make passive active! Search your sentences for a form of "to be" (is, are, was, were) + a past-tense verb (was edited, were taken, is sold, was caught) and rearrange to state the actor + past-tense verb only (I edited, I took, They sold, We caught). Also, eliminate prepositional phrases to eliminate extra words!

Examples: "Positive reviews were always received about my events."

SATISFACTION AS A REASON

You'll be hired or awarded a fellowship for what you can do, not because of what you will gain from the experience. Convince the reader of your value (skills, knowledge and abilities).

Example: "I have always been fascinated by British culture, and would love to use my skills at the British Consulate."

SPOT THE DIFFERENCE



I have excellent attention to detail and experience with planning events. I spent 6 months as an Operations and Event Planning Intern at The White House Project and worked in Conference and Event Services at the University of Denver. I have a lot of experience organizing events for different clients and troubleshooting when problems arise. Positive reviews were always received about my events. At The White House Project, I was fortunate enough to be able to coordinate numerous events. Both positions afforded me the skills to confidently understand what is needed to run an event successfully. I have always been fascinated by British culture, and would love to use my skills at the British Consulate.

My excellent organizational and event planning skills would make me an asset to the British Consulate's annual fundraising event. As an Operations and Planning Intern for The White House Project, I planned many successful events, including two full-day seminars in Greeley and Pueblo designed to encourage women to run for political office. I worked with diverse constituencies in each of the communities to recruit attendees and develop a curriculum to best meet their needs. Additionally, I contacted and hired vendors, ensured the physical space was set up correctly, and served as the point of contact for all vendors, speakers, and invitees. This work involved attention to detail as well as the ability to think on my feet when a vendor cancelled on us at the last minute and I was able to quickly find a replacement. Both sessions were well-attended, and post event surveys spoke positively to both the content of the course and how smoothly the day had gone. I look forward to using my organizational and planning skills to help the British Consulate's fundraising event be the most successful one yet.

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