



Cover Letter Basics

A cover letter, or a letter of application, is a document in which you communicate to an employer what skills and experiences you have that are needed for a job. Not every job posting requires a cover letter, but it's a good idea to include one regardless because what you write in a cover letter can set you apart from other candidates. Cover letters written for on-campus job can be slightly more casual than cover letters written for formal internships or jobs. While you may send the same resume for each position you apply for, you should write a separate cover letter for each different position.

Musts: A cover letter must...

- Include a salutation and a closing:
e.g. Dear Mr. Smith, Sincerely,
- State the position for which you're applying.
e.g. I am writing to express my interest in working (at the climbing wall.)
- Describe the skills that you have in relation to the job and describe how you acquired those skills (past job/internship/extracurricular.)
e.g. Having interned at (The New York Times) last summer, I am confident in my ability to effectively express my ideas in writing.)
- Be free of spelling and grammatical errors.
- Avoid the use of "love language."
e.g. I would appreciate the opportunity to intern for your (Human Resources department) this summer.
- Be 1-3 paragraphs in length.

Best Practices: A good cover letter should...

- Be addressed to a specific person if a contact is provided.
e.g. Dear Mr. John Smith
- Show enthusiasm for the position.
e.g. I am excited at the prospect of (working with the Writing Center as a Writing Tutor).
- Have an introduction that provides relevant descriptors other than your name.
e.g. I am an (English and psychology double) major.
- Explain why the job fits both your interests and skills.
e.g. This position would allow me to gain some valuable experience in (marketing).
- List qualities that most employers value.
e.g. A commitment to excellence, strong interpersonal skills, etc.
- Be supplemented with a follow-up contact and/or a visit to the department for positions you're particularly excited about.