



COVER LETTERS

Your letters and e-mail messages to employers create their first impression of your communication skills, interest, and knowledge about the organization and field. Make every effort to tailor each letter, or e-mail, to show the connection between your qualifications and the employer's requirements. While this takes more time, targeted letters are far more effective in helping candidates land interviews.

Cover Letters

It is always a good idea to include a cover letter when you are applying for a position, even when it is not required or requested. Many job or internship applications only request a resume. However, a well-written cover letter serves to introduce your resume and gives you the opportunity to direct your reader's attention to specific areas of your background.

COVER LETTER TIPS

- Target your cover letter to match each particular organization and position being sought.
- Match your skills to the skills the employer is seeking and provide concrete examples.
- Address your letter to a specific individual, whenever possible. When a name is not available, use "Hiring Manager" or "Internship Coordinator" in lieu of "To Whom It May Concern" or "Sir/Madam."
- If someone has referred you to this position (e.g. an alumni contact, family friend, or parent), mention this at the beginning of the letter.
- Your cover letter will most likely be sent via e-mail (as an attachment, or as the message itself), or it may be uploaded as part of an online application along with other supportive materials. In some rare cases, a hard-copy printed version is requested to be sent via the postal service.

GOALS OF A COVER LETTER

- **Introduce yourself**, your major, degree anticipated, and how you learned of the opportunity.
- **Express your interest** and enthusiasm in a position and the organization.
- **Demonstrate your experiences** through specific, related examples and "matching" your experiences with the position requirements whenever possible.
- **Convince the employer** that you possess the skills and abilities they are looking for in an employee and that they should invite you to interview.

USING E-MAIL TO SUBMIT COVER LETTERS AND RESUMES

For e-mail submission of resumes and cover letters, you have two choices:

- Write a brief e-mail message stating that you are attaching a cover letter and resume for the employer's consideration. Be sure to mention the title of the job or internship, or type of position you are seeking, as reference for the employer.
- Use your cover letter as the body of your e-mail message, and attach your resume. Please note that e-mail format does not require you to include your mailing address, the date, or the recipient's mailing address.



Cover Letter Template

Use a one-page standard business letter format with margins ranging from 3/4" to 1" on all sides, and a basic font in sizes 10-12 point size.

Your Street Address
City, ST, Zip Code

Date

Contact's Name
Contact's Title
Organization Name
Street Address
City, ST, Zip Code

If you are attaching your cover letter to an e-mail message, follow the standard business letter format in this example.

If you are sending your cover letter in the body of an e-mail message, omit the information to the left and begin with the salutation (Dear Mr., Ms. or Dr.).

Dear Mr., Ms., or Dr. (person's last name only):

Opening Paragraph

- State the position you are pursuing and how you learned about it. If you were referred by an employee or an alumnus/a, mention this as well. If you are not aware of a specific position, state your area of interest.
- Briefly introduce yourself by stating your major and degree anticipated.
- Tell the employer briefly (one or two sentences) why you are interested in the position with their organization. Avoid generic reasons that are taken directly from the organization's website.
- Include a transition statement that highlights the relevant skills and experiences you will write about during the middle paragraph(s).

Middle Paragraph(s)

- In this section of your letter, explain the relevant skills you have developed and knowledge you have gained through your past work, volunteer, leadership experiences, and classes. Highlight those that would be of most interest to the organization and would enable you to contribute to the organization.
- Show a "match" between your background and the main requirements of the position by using examples. Include how a particular skill or experience will help you meet specific requirements of the position.
- If you are writing a general letter of inquiry, explain why you are interested in learning more about that career field.
- If you are writing a letter of intent also include information as to how this position, internship, or residency program will compliment and contribute to your long term goals or plans.

Last Paragraph

- State that you have included (or attached) your resume and would welcome an interview to further discuss this opportunity.
- If you need to explain anything out of the ordinary on your resume, this is the place to do it.
- You may offer to follow-up by phone with the recruiter in two weeks, if you do not hear from them before that time.
- Finish by thanking the employer for their time and consideration and offer to provide any additional information.

Sincerely,

Your signature (leave four blank spaces for this)

Your name in print

For e-mail, you may use a script font or a scanned version of your signature.



Types of Cover Letters

LETTERS OF APPLICATION

Most traditional cover letters are letters of application. They are limited to one page and written to accompany a resume in application to a specific position. Therefore, each letter of application should be unique and tailored to match the position.

LETTERS OF INQUIRY

If you are applying to an organization, but not a position in particular, you would write a letter of inquiry. A letter of inquiry is a general term for any letter or e-mail used to gather more information about options and opportunities. It may be addressed to anyone who might be able to provide details about a job, career field, or organization of interest. Here are some points to consider:

- This letter uses the same format as a cover letter.
- The content of this letter will vary slightly depending upon whom you contact and what you hope to learn from the correspondence. For example, if you wish to speak with alumni working in a particular career field to learn more about the nature of the work and the types of options that exist within the field, your opening paragraph should make that goal clear. Always be sure to state the purpose of your letter.
- You should always include examples of your accomplishments and skills within the letter, even if you don't have a specific job description.

LETTERS OF INTENT

If you are applying for a job or internship, you may be asked to include a "letter of intent" for the position along with your application. A letter of intent is very similar to a letter of application in that it asks you to express your interest in the position, describe your relevant skills and experiences, and convince the employer that you are an ideal candidate. Letters of intent differ from more traditional cover letters in that they provide applicants the ability to go into greater detail about their academic and professional goals. Here are some points to consider:

- This letter uses the same format as a cover letter.
- Letters of intent are usually between one and one and one-half pages in length.
- The content of this letter will vary slightly and allow you to include a more detailed explanation of your academic or professional interests in a particular professional area, residency program, or internship.





E-mail Etiquette

There may be occasions when you need to communicate with an employer via e-mail, for example, to forward additional information, or to inquire further about a position in which you are interested. In these instances, it is important to remember that this communication must be businesslike and professional. Some additional points to keep in mind:

- Be sure to include a meaningful subject line; this helps clarify what your message is about and may also help the recipient prioritize reading your email.
- Compose a clear and concise message. Be sure to identify who you are and why you are contacting the employer.
- Be sure to open your email with a greeting like Dear Dr. Jones, or Ms. Smith:
- Take time to compose and proofread your e-mail, ensuring that there are no errors in spelling or grammar. Do not use “emoticons,” “txt lingo,” or “CAPITAL LETTERS”.
- Save your documents as PDF’s to preserve the documents formatting.
- Include your name in the document title so it is easier for employers to keep track you of your files.
- Double-check that you have attached all required documents before sending.