



What is a Cover Letter?

To be considered for almost any position, you will need to write a cover letter. Such a letter introduces you, explains your purpose for writing, highlights a few of your experiences or skills, and requests an opportunity to meet personally with the potential employer.

Precisely because this letter is your introduction to an employer and because first impressions count, you should take great care to write an impressive and effective letter. Remember that the letter not only tells of your accomplishments but also reveals how effectively you can communicate.

The appropriate content, format, and tone for cover letters vary according to the position and the personality of the applicant. Thus you will want to ask several people (if possible) who have had experience in obtaining jobs or in hiring in your field to critique a draft of your letter and to offer suggestions for revision. The Lincoln College Office of Career Services can help you with reviewing your letter among other things.

You must identify your specific reasons for applying for each position and be clear about what makes you different from other applicants. It is your job to showcase what you can bring to an employer, and it is the employer's job to decide if you are the best candidate for the position.

Despite the differences in what constitutes a good application letter, the suggestions on these pages apply generally. **Remember, the best cover letters are individual and should not be simply copied from a guide.**



Formatting, Style, and Language

- A cover letter is professional correspondence. A properly formatted cover letter shows employers that you understand and can follow standard business conventions.
- Try to limit your letter to a single page. Be succinct.
- Assess the employer's needs and your skills. Then try to match them in the letter in a way that will appeal to the employer's self-interest.
- As much as possible, tailor your letter to each job opportunity. Demonstrate, if possible, some knowledge of the organization to which you are applying.
- Write in a style that is mature but clear; avoid long and intricate sentences and paragraphs; avoid jargon. Use action verbs and the active voice; convey confidence, optimism, and enthusiasm coupled with respect and professionalism.
- Show some personality, but avoid hard-sell, gimmicky, or unorthodox letters. Start fast; attract interest immediately.
- Avoid exclamation points, exaggerations, clichés, and abbreviations (unless previously spelled out).
- Arrange the points in a logical sequence; organize each paragraph around a main point.
- Strike the right tone: be confident, but not boastful. It is important to highlight what an organization will get when they hire you, NOT how an organization can help you achieve your personal ambitions.
- Eliminate typographical errors. Remember that spell check software does not catch grammar mistakes
- When printing your letter, use 8.5 x 11 high quality white or ivory paper.



How to organize a cover letter

Remember, your letter should complement, not restate, your resumé.

Opening Paragraph

State why you are writing.

Establish a point of contact (advertisement in a specific place for a specific position; a particular person's suggestion that you write): give some brief idea of who you are (a Senior engineering student at UW; a recent Ph.D. in History).

Middle Paragraph(s)

Highlight a few of the most salient points from your enclosed resumé.

Arouse your reader's curiosity by mentioning points that are likely to be important for the position you are seeking.

Show how your education and experience suit the requirements of the position, and, by elaborating on a few points from your resumé, explain what you could contribute to the organization.

Closing paragraph

Stress action. Politely request an interview at the employer's convenience.

Indicate what supplementary material is being sent under separate cover and offer to provide additional information (a portfolio, a writing sample, a sample publication, a dossier, an audition tape), and explain how it can be obtained.

Thank the reader for his/her consideration and indicate that you are looking forward to hearing from him/her.

Questions to guide your writing

- Who is my audience?
- What is my objective?
- What are the objectives and needs of my audience?
- How can I best express my objective in relationship to my audience's objectives and needs?
- What specific benefits can I offer to my audience and how can I best express them?
- What opening sentence and paragraph will grab the attention of my audience in a positive manner and invite them to read further?
- How can I maintain and heighten the interest and desire of the reader throughout the letter?
- What evidence can I present of my value to my audience?
- If a resume is enclosed with the letter, how can I best make the letter advertise the resume?
- What closing sentence or paragraph will best assure the reader of my capabilities and persuade him or her to contact me for further information?
- Is the letter my best professional effort?
- Have I spent sufficient time drafting, revising, and proofreading the letter?

**From Ronald L. Kraunich, William J. Bauis. High Impact Resumes & Letters. Virginia Beach, VA: Impact Publications, 1982.*



COVER LETTER GUIDE

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Date

Specific Person (if known and applicable)

Title of Specific Person

Company Name

135 Address Street

City, State, Zip Code

Student Name

123 Address Street

City, State, Zip Code

Your Phone Number

Your Professional Email

Dear Specific Person, Job Title, or Committee (if known and applicable):

In the first paragraph, be sure to introduce yourself and discuss why you are interested in interning with this specific firm. It is recommend that you include at least two or three well written sentences explaining why the firm's internship is of interest to you and how you are strategic fit with this firm, their mission, vision, culture, unique value proposition, etc.

In the second (and third paragraphs), it is recommend that you highlight your academic achievements, extra-curricular activities that apply to the internship, volunteer experience, honors, and future career interests after you have graduated with your degree from Lincoln College. Discuss what specific and value-adding skill-sets you would likely bring to the company and what you hope to take away from the internship experience if you are brought on by this firm or organization. Feel free to include specific courses that you have completed at Lincoln College and the specific learning outcomes that directly apply to your firm of interest.

The last paragraph may be a great summary of why you are interested in this specific company and address why you feel you are a great fit. Be sure to include your contact information (phone number and student email address). Invite the reviewer to read your resume and thank him/her for their valuable time and consideration. After reviewing your cover letter, be sure that you fill the entire page and edit your spacing to create a visually appealing and balanced cover letter. It is recommended that you use an 11 or 12 point font for your cover letter. Be sure to double check your cover letter for spelling errors and grammatical errors that may include sentence fragments, punctuation errors, etc. Close your cover letter with strong interest, energy, and passion and the reviewer will likely take notice!

Sincerely yours,

Be sure to sign your signature if you are mailing your cover letter. This little detail goes a long way!

Student Name



Action Words for Resumés and Cover Letters

Communication skills

Addressed	Advertised
Arbitrated	Arranged
Articulated	Authored
Clarified	Collaborated
Communicated	
Composed	
Condensed	Conferred
Consulted	Contacted
Conveyed	Convinced
Corresponded	Debated
Defined	Developed
Directed	Discussed
Drafted	Edited
Elicited	Enlisted
Explained	Expressed
Formulated	Furnished
Incorporated	Influenced
Interacted	Interpreted
Interviewed	Involved
Joined	Judged
Lectured	Listened
Marketed	Mediated
Moderated	Negotiated
Observed	Outlined
Participated	Persuaded
Presented	Promoted
Proposed	Publicized
Reconciled	Recruited
Referred	Reinforced
Reported	Resolved
Responded	Solicited
Specified	Spoke
Suggested	Summarized
Synthesized	Translated
Wrote	

Mgmt/leadership skills

Administered	Analyzed
Appointed	Approved
Assigned	Attained
Authorized	Chaired
Considered	Consolidated
Contracted	Controlled
Converted	Coordinated
Decided	Delegated
Developed	Directed
Eliminated	Emphasized
Enforced	Enhanced
Established	Executed
Generated	Handled
Headed	Hired
Hosted	Improved
Incorporated	Increased
Initiated	Inspected
Instituted	Led
Managed	Merged
Motivated	Navigated
Organized	Originated
Overhauled	Oversaw
Planned	Presided
Prioritized	Produced
Recommended	
Reorganized	
Replaced	Restored
Reviewed	Scheduled
Secured	Selected
Streamlined	Strengthened
Supervised	Terminated

Helping skills

Adapted	Advocated
Aided	Answered
Arranged	Assessed
Assisted	Clarified
Coached	Collaborated
Contributed	Cooperated
Counseled	Demonstrated
Diagnosed	Educated
Encouraged	Ensured
Expedited	Facilitated
Familiarized	Furthered
Guided	Helped
Insured	Intervened
Motivated	Prevented
Provided	Referred
Rehabilitated	Represented
Resolved	Simplified
Supplied	Supported
Volunteered	

Research skills

Analyzed	Clarified
Collected	Compared
Conducted	Critiqued
Detected	Determined
Diagnosed	Evaluated
Examined	Experimented
Explored	Extracted
Formulated	Gathered
Inspected	Interviewed
Invented	Investigated
Located	Measured
Organized	Researched
Reviewed	Searched
Solved	Summarized
Surveyed	Tested

Action Words for Resumés and Cover Letters

Organizational skills

Approved	Arranged
Catalogued	Categorized
Charted	Classified
Coded	Collected
Compiled	Corrected
Corresponded	Distributed
Executed	Filed
Generated	Incorporated
Inspected	Logged
Maintained	Monitored
Obtained	Operated
Ordered	Organized
Prepared	Processed
Provided	Purchased
Recorded	Registered
Reserved	Responded
Reviewed	Routed
Scheduled	Screened
Submitted	Supplied
Standardized	Updated
Validated	Verified

Technical skills

Adapted	Applied
Assembled	Built
Calculated	Computed
Conserved	Constructed
Converted	Debugged
Designed	Determined
Developed	Engineered
Fabricated	Fortified
Installed	Maintained
Operated	Overhauled
Printed	Programmed
Rectified	Regulated
Remodeled	Repaired
Replaced	Restored
Solved	Specialized
Standardized	Studied
Upgraded	Utilized

Teaching skills

Adapted	Advised
Clarified	Coached
Communicated	
Conducted	
Coordinated	Critiqued
Developed	Enabled
Encouraged	Evaluated
Explained	Facilitated
Focused	Guided
Individualized	
Informed	
Instilled	Instructed
Motivated	Persuaded
Simulated	Stimulated
Taught	Tested
Trained	Transmitted
Tutored	

Creative skills

Acted	Adapted
Began	Combined
Composed	
Conceptualized	
Condensed	Created
Customized	Designed
Developed	Directed
Displayed	Drew
Entertained	Established
Fashioned	Formulated
Founded	Illustrated
Initiated	Instituted
Integrated	Introduced
Invented	Modeled
Modified	Originated
Performed	Photographed
Planned	Revised
Revitalized	Shaped
Solved	

Data/financial skills

Administered	Adjusted
Allocated	Analyzed
Appraised	Assessed
Audited	Balanced
Budgeted	Calculated
Computed	Conserved
Corrected	Determined
Developed	Estimated
Forecasted	Managed
Marketed	Measured
Netted	Planned
Prepared	Programmed
Projected	Qualified
Reconciled	Reduced
Researched	Retrieved

