

## COVER LETTERS

### Purpose of a Cover Letter

*It is your introduction to the employer and an opportunity to state your interest in the position and the company. Be sure to reflect on your qualifications and articulate them through relevant and professional stories.*

### Cover Letter Tips

*Cover letters should be less than a page in length -- usually 3 to 4 paragraphs.*

- Cover letters should be customized to each company/position and should reflect any special skills or knowledge you possess related to the job. Employers recognize generic cover letters, so it is important to tailor your letter. Research the company and position description to write a strong cover letter.
- Address the letter to a specific person. Look on the website/ LinkedIn to find a contact and, if you cannot find the information, call the company's human resources office.
- Spell check and proofread to avoid errors and ask someone to proofread your letter.
- Share two or three relevant experiences/professional stories reflecting skills sought by the employer (incorporate keywords from the job description so you stand out).
- Heading, margins, font size and type should match your resume.

### Cover Letter Facts

#### **Do I need to send a cover letter with every resume I submit?**

**Answer:** There are times when cover letters are not necessary (i.e. on campus interviews arranged through University Career Services, Job Fairs, or other special circumstances). In most cases, especially when you initiate contact, it is a good idea to include one. If ever in doubt, send a cover letter with your resume.

#### **Does the cover letter repeat the same information listed on my resume?**

**Answer:** The cover letter is usually read before your resume and may highlight or elaborate on specific information on your resume. More importantly, the cover letter allows you to state why you are interested in the position and explain previous responsibilities, experiences and skills you developed.

#### **Will I come across as boastful if I write about my strengths? I feel uncomfortable "bragging."**

**Answer:** If you carefully plan your letter and communicate effectively, you can avoid sounding boastful. Make sure to give concrete examples of how you have developed skills and used your talents.

# SAMPLE COVER LETTER OUTLINE

Your cover letter header can be the same as it is on your resume OR use the format below:

**Your Name**  
**City, State Zip Code**  
**Date (that you submit the documents)**

*(Quadruple space)*

**Ms./Mr. Employer Name**  
**Title**  
**Company**  
**Mailing Address**  
**City, State Zip Code**

**Dear Mr./Ms. \_\_\_\_\_:**

**Introduction Paragraph 1** – State why you are writing. Name the position and company that you are applying to. Name the source from which you learned about the position. If you learned of the position from a personal contact, it is okay to use their name (ask for their permission). This paragraph will be 2-4 sentences.

**Middle Paragraph 2** – Select two or three of the skills or qualifications the employer seeks and demonstrate you have them by sharing a couple of professional stories. Each story should be two or three sentences long and provide situation or context, the action you took, and the result. This paragraph will be the bulk of your cover letter.

**Middle Paragraph 3** – Discuss your interest in the organization. Consider the company's mission, values, goals, culture, projects, clients, and recent accolades. This paragraph helps employers see why you are a good fit for the position.

**Conclusion Paragraph 4** – Restate your interest in the position and thank the reader for their time. Refer the reader to the enclosed application form or resume. You can say that you look forward to hearing from the company soon and/or that you will call in two weeks to follow up on the status of your application. It is okay to include contact information again. This will be a short paragraph.

**Sincerely,**

*(Quadruple space)*

**(Your Signature, black ink or scan with a computer)**

**Type your name**

**#StateYourPATH**

