

GUIDE TO COVER LETTER WRITING

Sage
Career Planning

The Sage Colleges Office of Career Planning

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Cover Letter Writing

A cover letter is a marketing tool intended to generate interest in you and get the reader excited about reviewing your accompanying resume. The cover letter should succinctly articulate your interest and enthusiasm for both the company and specific position, and demonstrates how your unique background, skills and experiences make you an excellent fit for both the position and organization to which you are applying.

General Tips

- Make connections between what is on your resume and the position requirements; don't just repeat what's on your resume.
 - Describe specific accomplishments, experiences and skills that demonstrate how you fit the position. Provide examples to support claims; doing so supports you and makes you a stronger candidate.
 - Cite examples from the most relevant areas of your background, including your internship or employment experience, leadership, extra-curricular activities and coursework.
- Prepare a unique letter for each position you apply to.
 - Nothing looks worse than a generic cover letter; make sure your cover letter highlights skill sets and credentials consistent with those of the job posting.
 - Customize the employer's information on each individual letter; specify why you are interested in working in this position at this company.
- Address each cover letter to the appropriate person.
 - Use "Dear Mr. or Ms. Last Name". Do not use phrases such as "To whom it may concern" or Dear Sir or Madam". If the name is unisex (e.g. Pat Brown), use "Dear First & Last Name".
 - Call the Human Resources office or Hiring Manager of each organization to find out who you should be addressing your letter to.
 - If you cannot identify the appropriate person, address your cover letter to "Hiring Manager" or "Human Resources Director".
- Keep a copy of every letter you send out.
 - Designate a folder on your computer to save each cover letter you send out. Use the dates on each cover letter as a reference.
 - If you do not hear from the employer within two weeks, follow up on the status of your application.
- Make it perfect.
 - Typographical errors, misspellings and poor word choice will earn your cover letter and resume a one way ticket to the "no pile".
 - Have someone proofread your letter before sending it out.
- Enthusiasm Sells.
 - Employers want candidates that want to work for them. Show them that you've researched their organization and make a convincing case for why you want to work for them.
 - Be professional and courteous, but let your personality come through.

Formatting Tips

- Use 8 ½" X 11" quality bound paper – the same kind you used for your resume.
- Keep it to one page, single spaced.
- Use 10-12 point font and choose the same style you chose for your resume.
- Remember to sign your name at the bottom of each hard copy letter you send out. If you apply electronically, scan a copy of your signature, save it as a Jpeg, and then add the image to the signature line.
- Use a Block Style Format, and align names, dates and paragraphs along the left-hand margin.
- Use 1" margins all around the page.

*****Remember that a cover letter is a professional pitch of why a company/organization should hire you... .be more formal and professional than you would in an email!*****

Cover Letter Format Outline

Your Street Address
City, ST Zip
Today's Date

Mr. /Ms. First and Last Name of Contact
Title of Employer
Company/Organization
Street Address
City, ST Zip

Dear Mr. /Ms. Last Name of Contact:

Your opening paragraph tells **why you are writing** and notes where you learned about the position or if someone referred you. When referring to the position, use the title used by the employer. If someone referred you and no specific title is known, be as specific as possible about the kind of position for which you are applying. Do some research on the organization so that you can state your interest in this particular employer.

Your middle paragraph(s) should **highlight your qualifications**. Make **direct connections from your resume and relevant experiences** and tailor each cover letter for every position that you apply to! Give details of your background that will show the reader why she/he should consider you as a candidate. If you have had relevant experience or related education, be sure to link your experiences and/or education to the position. By using examples, show the employer that you have the necessary skills they seek.

You could include another paragraph **detailing additional experience** that will highlight your qualifications. For a concluding sentence, summarize the skills and personal traits that you would bring to the job for which you are applying. Also, remember that the reader will view your letter as an example of your writing skills.

In your closing paragraph, **reiterate your interest in the position, thank the employer for his/her consideration, provide your contact information, and indicate the follow-up action**. State what you want the recipient of the letter to do next (such as contacting you to further discuss the available position) or what you will do next (such as calling to follow-up on the status of your application). If you say that you're going to follow up on the status of your application, **REMEMBER TO FOLLOW-UP!**

Sincerely,

(Sign your name)

Your Name (typed)

Tips

When writing a cover letter, you want to market your experiences, background and skill set *to the specific position to which you're applying*. Depending on the position, you may pull from different areas of your own background, and choose to highlight experiences that better target the skill sets and credentials most pertinent to the specific job or internship you're applying to. Below is a sample internship description for a position at Ticketmaster. Notice how Wesley, the student whose cover letter appears on the preceding page, draws a clear link between the skills/experiences detailed in the job description and his own academic background, skill set and campus involvement. In doing so, Wesley makes a clear case for his candidacy.

Sample Job Description

Job Title: Marketing/Promotions Intern
Company: Ticketmaster
Industry: Arts & Entertainment – Other, Retail/Merchandising
Job Function: Marketing
Description: As a *marketing* intern for Ticketmaster, you can expect to learn *sales and marketing practices* of the ticketing industry in the world of entertainment. The internship will allow you to enhance your *writing, presentation and research skills* as well as learn how to *develop and maintain client relationships*. By the completion of the internship you should know how to determine via *research* what *marketing techniques* to apply to various projects, online placement, discounting, promotions and more. This internship will give you insight and vast general knowledge of *marketing* in live entertainment ticketing; concerts, sports, arts and family events.

Look for keywords – descriptive action verbs and adjectives defining the main responsibilities and qualifications of the position – in the job description and try to use them in the body of your cover letter.

Notice the skill sets that the position highlights. Key terms are bolded and italicized for emphasis.

Position Responsibilities:

- Track event data and present findings.
- Develop recap materials and the conclusion of a promotion.
- Support product-related initiatives.
- Contribute to website content and the creation of custom web pages.
- Monitor that the Ticketmaster brand is properly represented in client and promotional partners advertisements.
- Assist with customized *marketing/promotional* presentations.
- Run quality assurance tests.

Qualifications:

- Student pursuing a BA/BS degree in related area from an accredited institution.
- Must have a minimum cumulative GPA of 3.0.
- Excellent *organizational, verbal and written communication skills* are essential.
- *Creativity* and strong attention to detail required.
- Proficiency with Microsoft Word/Excel/Power Point and the Internet required.
- Must be able to work in a *team environment* and able to meet deadlines.

Additional Information:

- Scheduling office hours is negotiable per applicant.
- Length of internship: minimum 15 hours per week for 10 weeks.

Contact: Rosalyn Leiva - East Regional Recruiter

Tip – Print out the job description for the position you're applying to, then identify and highlight keywords from the posting. This will help you better "target" your cover letter.

Sample Cover Letter 1

817 South Street, Apt 6
Albany, NY 12210

January 7th, 2017

Ms. Veronica Corningstone
East Regional Recruiter
Ticketmaster

Dear Ms. Corningstone:

In response to your posting for the Marketing/Promotions Intern, attached is my resume for your consideration. I learned of this position through the Office of Career Planning at Sage College of Albany. After reviewing the position description and researching Ticketmaster, I believe this internship represents an ideal opportunity.

As a sophomore at Sage College of Albany, I have undertaken a number of courses and extra-curricular engagements that prepared me for this internship. Majoring in business has helped develop **my research, analytical and creative thinking skills**, as it has allowed me to contemplate the relationships between human behavior and economical, environmental and cultural factors. As part of a project, I am currently **researching** how companies effectively utilize branding strategies and catchy logos to increase their client base and better capture their target markets. I believe this on-going **analysis** of corporate markets and the knowledge I am gaining regarding effective **marketing strategies** will directly benefit the Marketing/Promotions department.

I've complemented my academic background with strong extra-curricular involvement. As Publicity Coordinator for the Association of Campus Events, I was responsible for overseeing and implementing a marketing plan for campus concerts, comedic performances, and novelty acts. This required **strong teamwork, organizational and interpersonal abilities** as I interfaced with campus administrators, student organizations and other ACE members in executing the marketing plan.

I believe I would be a strong asset to the Marketing/Promotions team at Ticketmaster and would greatly appreciate the opportunity to further discuss my qualifications with you. I can be reached at 518-333-6565 or via e-mail at mantow@sage.edu. Thank you for your time and consideration

Sincerely,
(insert signature here)
Wesley Mantooth

First Paragraph – Cite the position you're applying to and reference where you found out about the opportunity (corporate website, personal referral, etc.). Try to display your enthusiasm for the position and/or line of work by stating WHY you want to work for the particular organization.

Highlight skills and pieces of your background consistent with the job posting. Wes does a good job of linking his own skill set with the needs of the specific position.

Closing Paragraph – Thank the employer for their time and reiterate your interest in the position.

Notice how Wes uses this paragraph to highlight his campus leadership experiences.

Body Paragraphs – Notice how Wesley specifically highlights some of the broader skill sets outlined in the job description, uses key words that are consistent with the job posting and cites examples to support his statements.

NOTE – All keywords on this cover letter are bolded and italicized for emphasis. Refrain from doing so on your own cover letter or resume.

Sample Cover Letter 2

81 4th Street
Troy, NY 12180
December 1st, 2016

Ms. Amy Smith
Regional Recruiter, Capital District
Enterprise Rent-A-Car
900 Central Avenue
Albany, NY 12206

Dear Ms. Smith:

I am writing to apply for the Management Trainee Internship position at Enterprise Rent-A-Car for the spring of 2017 semester that is posted on your website. I am excited about the opportunity to enhance my skills and knowledge about the world of business through a well-known and reputable hands-on internship program such as yours.

As the attached resume indicates, I spent that past two summers working with the Institutional Advancement team at The Sage Colleges. Through this position, I was able to experience firsthand what it is like to work in a team-based environment and gained valuable insight into what it takes to be successful and keep the college running. I was involved in establishing and maintaining relationships with alumni, creating marketing materials to send to donors, and planning events for the alumni donors. In this position, I successfully created and implemented an event for local alumni to thank them for their donations to The Sage Colleges in which over 60 alumni attended each year. My experience working with the Office of Institutional Advancement have provided me with a strong set of administrative and communication skills.

While maintaining a full course load at Russell Sage College, I have also demonstrated that I am hard-working and passionate about giving back to the community. As a volunteer EMT, it is imperative that I am dependable, a team player, and can handle working under stress. I have demonstrated my leadership skills in this position, and as a result of that, my supervisors have asked me to train more than 8 new volunteers over the past year. In addition, I am a member of the Russell Sage Habitat for Humanity Club and conduct community service throughout the Capital Region, as well as a bi-annual trip to New Orleans. For the trips to New Orleans, we depend heavily on fundraising, and I this year, I am in charge of brainstorming ideas of how to raise money and using my creativity to develop the advertising materials and flyers.

I believe that I would be a great fit for this internship, as I have had many experiences that have allowed me to strengthen and demonstrate my leadership, communication, and customer service skills. I would be thrilled to have the opportunity to discuss the internship with you further. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Edie Tour

Sample Cover Letter – E-Mail Body

When sending a cover letter via email, we recommend attaching it as an attachment, and provide a brief introduction and summary paragraph. Below is a sample of an introductory paragraph to include:

Dear Mr. Paper:

Please accept the attached cover letter and resume in response to the Journalism Internship recently posted on your website. Since moving to the Capital District, I have been very impressed by the quality of stories and content of your newspaper, and believe my education background and journalism experience could be of use to your organization.

If you wish to contact me to discuss this opportunity and my qualifications further, I can be reached at (276) 555-0201 or toue2@sage.edu. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Edie Tour

Cover Letter Sentence Starters

As stated earlier, the purpose of the cover letter is to get the reader excited about your candidacy and make them want to read your resume. As such, you want to communicate your relevant qualifications as they fit the needs of the position while also expressing your enthusiasm towards a particular company and/or career field. Because knowing what to say in a cover letter can be difficult, we've listed a number of "sentence starters" to aid you in matching your unique background, skill set and qualifications to the needs of the position and employer. Use these sentence starters as examples when drafting the three parts of your cover letter: the introduction, the body and the closing paragraph.

INTRODUCTION

- It is with great interest that I am applying for the position of _____.
- (Name of contact) provided me with your name and suggested I contact you in reference to the _____ position.
- As a recent graduate of Russell Sage College with a degree in _____ and an avid (reader, writer, sports enthusiast, etc.), I believe I am a strong applicant for the position of _____.
- I am eager to apply for the position of _____ because I believe I have the _____ that it takes to be successful in the position.
- Thank you for speaking with me on (date) and discussing the _____ position is a wonderful match for my talents and _____.
- Your organization impresses me because of (the performance of your product, the integrity of your support staff, its customer satisfaction, etc.).

BODY

- My experience as a _____ will help me to contribute _____.
- Throughout my four years of undergraduate studies I have demonstrated skills and abilities that are exactly what the position of _____ demands.
- My previous success in _____ has proven my ability to _____.
- To highlight some of my accomplishments I have _____.
- Working with _____ has strengthened and improved my already strong (analytical, research, interpersonal, organizational, etc.) and (analytical, research, interpersonal, organizational, etc.) skills.
- I am confident that I can be a valuable asset to your organization because _____.

CLOSING

- I am eager to learn more about _____ and would like to discuss my qualifications and interests with you.
- I am interested in the position and would appreciate the opportunity to discuss my background and your requirements in greater detail.
- I feel that my _____ and _____ make me a strong candidate for this position and therefore look forward to the possibility of employment with (name of organization).
- I would appreciate the opportunity to further discuss my qualifications with you. I can be reached at (phone number) or by email at _____.
- I will contact you within (10 days, 1 week, etc.) to (verify my application materials are in order, introduce myself, inquire as to the next steps, etc.).

SENTENCES THAT CAN BE USED MULTIPLE TIMES

- I would like the opportunity to put my skills, drive and enthusiasm to work as a _____ or _____.
- Being (a team player, results driven, a quick learner, etc.) who loves challenges, I will _____.
- My career goal is to _____. Therefore I welcome the opportunity to make a contribution to (organization name here).
- The _____ position described in _____ sounds exactly like the opportunity I'm looking for.

Thank You Notes

We highly recommend sending thank you notes/ emails after an interview. By sending a thank you letter or email to each person that you interviewed with, you can set yourself apart from the other candidates and show your interest. Keep them short... no more than one page or a few paragraphs! You can find out the interviewers information on where to email it to/mail it to on their website or from their Human Resources office.

What to include:

- A specific topic that you discussed during your interview that you found particularly interesting
- Mention any relevant or important information that you may have forgotten to mention or did not have the opportunity to mention
- Reiterate important information that you discussed such as start date, relocating, etc.
- Restate your skills, qualifications and passion for the position

Sample:

Dear Ms. Smith,

Thank you for the opportunity to interview for the position of Management Trainee Intern at Enterprise. I enjoyed discussing our shared passion of hiking in the Adirondacks and exploring the Capital District. I am excited about the opportunity to discuss my interest in this position and gaining real-world hands on experience. If you wish to discuss my qualifications and interest further, I can be reached via this email address or at (123) 456-7890. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Edie Tour