

CONSTRUCTING A COVER LETTER



A Cover Letter gives you the opportunity to sell yourself to the employer beyond your Resume. In a Cover Letter you will have the opportunity to market yourself for the specific position for which you are applying. A Cover Letter is also considered a writing sample, and employers may use this document as one method of screening out unqualified candidates.

The Gerri Ripp Center For Career Development

Iona College

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WHAT IS A COVER LETTER?

A Cover Letter is a one page document that is designed to introduce yourself, and your credentials to an employer. The document's purpose is to highlight your education and key accomplishments so that the organization will know what you are applying for, and how you are specifically qualified for that position. In many cases, a Cover Letter will be the deciding factor in whether or not your resume is passed on for further consideration. Often looked at as a writing sample, the Cover Letter is your chance to sell yourself beyond your resume.

WHY IS A COVER LETTER IMPORTANT?

Your Cover Letter also gives you the opportunity to tell the organization what type of position you are looking for. If you just send in a resume, it will only show the employer your past work experience. However, it does not show what you wish to do in the future. Marketing yourself with a Cover Letter will give you the opportunity to tell the employer what position you are applying for, and how you are qualified for that position. This document also explains more of your history beyond your resume. An example would be if you are reentering the job market, have large gaps in your work experience, or even looking for a career change, this can all be described and portrayed in a positive way in the Cover Letter.

TYPES OF COVER LETTERS?

When applying for an internship or any type of professional position it can be very helpful to send a Cover Letter first, to let the employer know what you are looking for.

There are THREE types of Cover Letters:

The Invited Cover Letter

This type of letter would be sent when you are applying for a specific position. In this document you want to make sure to speak of your qualifications and excitement for the position.

The Cold-Contact Cover Letter/ Letter of Inquiry

A cold-contact letter can be sent to an organization inquiring about any available opportunities. This type of letter is sent out when there is no specific position listed, and can be the key to the 'hidden job-market'. With a letter of inquiry, it is often beneficial to follow up with a phone call to increase your chances of getting your foot in the door.

The Referral Cover-Letter

This type of Cover Letter uses the 'name dropping' technique which shows the employer that you have been referred or recommended to apply for the position. An example of how to write this would be "John Smith from the accounting department, suggested I contact you about the opening in..."

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS REGARDING COVER LETTERS

Why is a Cover Letter Necessary?

With such a competitive job market, you want to make sure that you are doing everything in your power to market yourself in the best light to the employer. Although a Cover Letter may only be reviewed for about twenty seconds, the employer will have the opportunity to see your writing skills, qualifications, and even get a glimpse into your personality, and if it will fit in with their organization.

What is the biggest mistake you can make in a Cover Letter?

In a Cover Letter you want to make sure to stress how you can contribute to the company in a positive way. A common mistake for writers is that they focus too much on what the company can do for them, rather than what they can do for the company. An example of this would be stating that you feel this experience will benefit your professional growth... although this is great, it gives the impression that you are only inquiring about the position for personal gain. Focus on how you can contribute to the organization.

Can I mass produce a generic Cover Letter?

NEVER!!!! It is important to focus each Cover Letter on the specific position you are applying for. An employer can easily see if a Cover Letter has been mass produced and sent to a variety of companies. It is important to address the specific company, employer, and position to avoid being generic. A good tip to remember when writing a Cover Letter is to look at the position description and address the specific traits and qualifications they are seeking.

What is the most important thing to include in a Cover Letter?

According to *Essential Careers*, the most important thing to include in your Cover Letter is your USP or *Unique Selling Position*. When constructing the document, you want to make sure to answer the question "Why should I hire you?" Make sure to write about how your qualifications and background would be an essential fit for both the position and the company.

Should I include references in my Cover Letter?

References should *NOT* be listed in the Cover Letter or on the Resume itself. References require their own page and are often required after you have been selected to interview. In most cases, an employer will request if references are required.

How long should my Cover Letter be?

In majority of the cases your Cover Letter should not exceed more than one page in length. It's important to be brief and to the point, showing the employer exactly how you are qualified for the position. Lengthy Cover Letters often result in the employer moving on to the next candidate.

WHAT MAKES A STRONG COVER LETTER?

Since the Cover Letter may also be used as a writing sample you want to make sure that the document is free of any spelling or grammatical errors, and gets to the point about how you would be the perfect fit for this desired position. Take a look at the points listed below to make sure that your Cover Letter will be marketing you in the best way possible:

No Spelling or Grammatical Errors

Do not rely on spell-check; often times spell-check just looks at words as opposed to context... make sure to show your document to Career Advisors and friends... the more eyes the better!

Address it directly to the employer

This gives the impression of a customized Cover Letter as opposed to a mass-generic document. This can be beneficial because it will more likely get the attention of the hiring professional as opposed to "To whom it may concern"

Use your own language

Make sure you write your own Cover Letter, as opposed to having someone else write it who may have a more extensive vocabulary. If you write using large words and complex synonyms make sure to be able to talk in the same manner. An employer would expect to meet and speak to the same person who wrote the document.

Speak about the specific company

It is important to show the employer that you know something about their company and the services that they provide. You want to make sure to stand out for knowing exactly what you are applying for, and separated from those who are just sending out mass applications to just find any entry level position.

Use terms and phrases that are relevant to the industry

Be specific to your industry. If you are in the Finance or Accounting field make sure to talk about key terms that are relevant such as Bonds, Yields, Hedge Funds etc. You want to give the impression to the employers that you are very familiar and knowledgeable of the field.

Keep it to the point

Since employers may have multiple Cover Letters to review, you want to make sure to focus your document on the position and get right to the point on how you are qualified. Cluttering the document with irrelevant information may cause the employer to move on to the next one!



COVER LETTER FORMAT

Your Name (Optional)
Your Current Address
City, State, ZIP Code
Phone Number
Email Address

Today's Date

Individual's Name
Position Title
Company Name
Street Address
City, State, ZIP Code

Dear Mr./Ms. _____, (Or "Dear Hiring Manager"),

First Paragraph: Let the employer know why you are writing, what specific position you are applying for and where you learned of this position.

Second Paragraph: Let the employer know why you are interested in the company and what type of work you are looking for. Here you want to talk specifically about how you are qualified, and how your education and experience is relevant to the position.

Third Paragraph: Close your Cover Letter by making a specific request for an interview such as "I welcome the opportunity to interview and further discuss my qualifications." Also, thank the person for taking time out of their day to consider you.

Sincerely,

(Handwritten signature)

Your Full Name

SAMPLE COVER LETTER—INTERNSHIP

715 North Avenue
New Rochelle, NY 10801

January 14, 20XX

Ms. Jennifer Lopez
Director of Marketing Department
MTV Studios
100 Musical Lane
New York, NY 10016

Dear Ms. Lopez:

I am writing in regards to the Marketing Internship position that is currently advertised on Iona College's GAELink system through the Gerri Ripp Center for Career Development.

As a current junior at Iona College majoring in Marketing, I am extremely excited about this opportunity. My unique mix of previous work experience, community service and extracurricular involvement in the Marketing Club makes me an ideal candidate for a summer internship with MTV Studios. Furthermore, my experience in sales and customer relationship management, combined with my coursework at Iona College, has convinced me that hospitality marketing is a career option I would love to explore. In addition, I currently serve as the Vice President for the Iona College Marketing Club. In this role, I handle the coordination of events sponsored by my club, which includes lectures facilitated by professors in various sectors of the Marketing field.

More importantly, an internship with MTV Studios would be mutually beneficial. Your company has an excellent reputation for customer satisfaction, and I know that the combination of my experience, education, and motivation to succeed will make me an asset to your Marketing department.

I welcome the chance to interview and discuss your needs and my strengths in person. Please feel free to contact me by email at TRoberts1@gaels.iona.edu or by phone at 914-633-2462.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Thomas Roberts

SAMPLE COVER LETTER—FULL TIME

Adam Levine
22 Melrose Place, Apartment 3K
Norwalk, CT 06854

August 8, 20XX

Ms. Jane Davis
Principal
The Green County Day School
700 Springfield Street
Greenwich, CT 06830

Dear Ms. Davis,

I found an advertisement for The Green County Day School Co-Teaching Program posted on Iona College's GAELink System. I strongly believe that my positive energy, dedication, leadership and knowledge make me an ideal candidate for this position. Due in part to talented teachers, I have excelled in the academic world since elementary school and would like the opportunity to help others in this way.

I am confident that my effective communication and organization skills will be useful in the classroom. For example, I revived my college's literary arts magazine, which has not existed on campus for five years. This role has given me the confidence to lead an organization and to motivate my peers to work together. I have also recently started tutoring elementary and middle school students in the on-campus Success Center. This opportunity has shown me how much I enjoy teaching students and learning from them on a daily basis. As co-teacher, I believe I can enhance the classroom experience for the students. I possess intellect, energy, and enthusiasm, and look forward to using these qualities to help children succeed both academically and emotionally.

It would be a pleasure to meet with you to further discuss my qualifications. Should you have any questions, or need any additional materials, feel free to contact me at (914) 633-2462 or by email at alevine1@iona.edu. Thank you for your time and consideration and I look forward to speaking to you soon.

Sincerely,

Adam Levine

SAMPLE COVER LETTER OF INQUIRY (“COLD”)

700 Harris Street
New Rochelle, NY 10801
914-555-5555 · Full.Name@gmail.com

August 12, 20XX

Company Name
Human Resources Department
2 Main Street
New Rochelle, NY 10801

Dear Human Resources Department:

I am interested in joining your Human Resources team to assist with your recruitment, on-boarding, and employee development areas.

I am a graduate of Iona College with a Master of Arts degree in Industrial-Organizational Psychology. I am very excited about the prospect of working with such a prestigious organization. My experience includes a Human Resources internship with a local hospital. Here, I collaborated and interacted with many levels of staff and administration. Additionally, I processed resumes and applications, observed interviews and reference checks, and scheduled new hire orientations. In my current role of Human Resources Assistant at Company Name, I work with newly hired interns and staff regarding all aspects of job placement, and professional etiquette during the on-boarding process. During my time at Former Company, I served as the point person for applicants, candidates, and staff during the interview process, and addressed their questions/concerns that arose.

My interpersonal skills and the ability to be a team player are essential for success when working with all levels of staff and administration. I interact well with diverse personalities, and am open-minded. Furthermore, I am consistently noted for my attention to detail when preparing written communications.

I would be honored to be given the opportunity to discuss how I can make a significant contribution to your company. Please do not hesitate to contact me at (914) 555-5555, or Full.Name@gmail.com.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Full Name

NO COVER LETTER REQUIRED?

If an employer indicated that they only require a Resume it is still acceptable to send a Cover Letter if you choose. In this case, you especially want to make sure that the document is free of any errors including typos, and spelling or grammatical mistakes. Sending a Cover Letter may separate you from other candidates, and if written correctly can help ensure an interview.



EMAIL / FAX INTRODUCTION WITHOUT A COVER LETTER

If you choose not to write a Cover Letter, at the very least you should write a note in the body of the email or on the cover sheet if you choose to fax the documents. This should look something like the following:

September 1, 20XX

Dear Mr./Ms. _____,

Attached please find my resume for the position of (POSITION) with (COMPANY). Should you have any questions I can be reached at (914) 633-2462. I look forward to speaking with you about the available opportunities at (COMPANY). Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Sara Thomas

COVER LETTER CHECKLIST

- _____ Is your Cover Letter original and specific to the company, rather than a generic, mass-produced document?
- _____ Is it clear to the employer on what is the best way to reach you during the day?
- _____ Is the Cover Letter formatted well, with a business letter style?
- _____ Is the document clear and to the point, while not exceeding one page in length?
- _____ Is every word spelled correctly? Have you reviewed all grammar, syntax, punctuation, etc?
- _____ Do you find the Cover Letter interesting and confident, but without being arrogant?
- _____ Does the document portray the image of a strong candidate and someone that the employer would like to hire?
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