

Stuart School of Business

ILLINOIS INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY



COVER LETTER WRITING GUIDE

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WHAT IS A COVER LETTER?:

A cover letter is a letter that should accompany each resume sent to an employer, networking contact or person assisting you with your job/internship/co-op search. Your cover letter is viewed as your first "writing sample" and should compliment (not just repeat) the information on your resume.

PURPOSE OF A COVER LETTER:

- Initiate contact with:
 - an employer to introduce yourself and inquire about job or internship possibilities
 - an employer to apply for an actual position
 - an alumnus, family or friend to ask for an informational interview
 - a professor or former supervisor to request a letter of recommendation
- Capture the employer's (or reader's) interest
- Invite the recipient to read the resume in depth
- Secure an interview (for information or employment purposes)

BASIC GUIDELINES FOR YOUR COVER LETTER:

- One page
- 3-4 paragraphs
- In a standard cover letter format (see samples)
- On high-quality paper that matches your resume
- Addressed to a SPECIFIC person, rather than "To whom it may concern." (Do your best to find out who the hiring manager is. If you cannot, address the letter to "Dear Sir or Madam" or "To the Director of Human Resources")
- Completely **error free** – have The Career Management Center and your friends/family proofread the letter

STANDARD FORMAT OF THE COVER LETTER (see samples):

Your contact information

Date

Employer's contact information

First Paragraph - Introduction: Use this paragraph to state your reason for writing and explain how you learned of the position. For example, "Please accept my enclosed resume in application for the position of Senior Analyst at Smith and Company. I learned of this opportunity through your online posting at eRecruiting.com and feel my qualifications are an excellent match for the responsibilities of the position."

Body Paragraphs – What you can offer them: Use this paragraph to emphasize and elaborate upon your strongest qualifications and be certain to address the specific qualifications the employer may have listed in the job description. If it seems that the position requires leadership skills, be sure to highlight your own leadership skills and demonstrate how your own skills and what the employer is seeking are a good match. You may also want to address why you want to work for them: Almost every employer will ask the question, "Why are you interested in this position?" or "Why are you interested in this company?" You can explain this in your cover letter if you wish.

Last Paragraph – Closing: Generally this section is used to thank the reader for their consideration and request an opportunity to discuss the position further. You should also use this paragraph to indicate to the employer how he/she can reach you. Alternately, you may indicate that you will contact the employer to follow up. If you do this, make sure you actually follow up!

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES for writing winning cover letters:

Wet Feet: http://www.stuart.iit.edu/careers/students/resources_online.html and log onto the Stuart Wet Feet Access

Vault: http://www.stuart.iit.edu/careers/students/resources_online.html and log onto Vault

MBA Authority Cover Letter Advice: http://www.mbaauthority.com/cc/cover_letter.html

MBA Depot: http://www.mbadepot.com/career/resume_center/resume_center.php

Riley Guide: <http://www.rileyguide.com/cover.html>

Standard Cover Letter Format

Your Name

Your Street Address • Chicago, IL 60000
youremail@stuart.iit.edu • 312.555.5050

January 1, 2006 (Today's date)

Ms./Mr./Dr. First and Last Name of the Individual
Title
Company Name
Street Address
City, ST Zip Code

Dear Ms./Mr./Dr. Last Name,

Introduction: Explain who you are and why you are writing. Also mention how you learned about the opportunity (the Career Management Center, company website, newspaper ad, friend, employment service, etc.).

Body: (One to three brief paragraphs). Describe why you are interested in this position/company and how you developed this interest. You may also mention what you know about the company's services, offices and operations. If you are a student/recent graduate, discuss how your educational background can help you make a contribution to the company. If you have some practical work experience, describe your skills and qualifications. Relate your skills to the needs of the company and the specific skills required as listed in the job description.

Conclusion: In the closing paragraph, indicate your request for a personal interview. Include your phone number or email address. You may let them know if you plan to follow up. In any case, let them know what the next steps are. Thank the reader for their time and consideration.

Sincerely,

(Your signature here, neatly handwritten)

Your typed name

Enclosure

Cover Letter Template

Use this template to help you get started writing your cover letter.

Name of hiring individual

Title

Company Name

Address

City, State Zip

Dear Ms./Mr./Dr. _____,

I am writing to apply for the position of _____, which I saw posted on _____. I am a _____ at the Illinois Institute of Technology, Stuart School of Business, concentrating in _____. After learning more about your company through _____,

I feel certain that my _____ and _____ make me a strong candidate for _____.

My experiences as a _____ at _____ helped me to develop strong _____ and _____. Additionally, I _____ which motivated me to _____. I am excited about _____ and believe that my background closely matches the requirements for this position. My resume is attached for your review.

Please consider my request for a personal interview as I am interested in discussing my qualifications with you in person. I will call you next week to _____. If you need additional information, please contact me via e-mail at _____ or by phone at _____. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Sample Cover Letter 1

JENNIFER WU

50 West Elm Street, #4A • Chicago, IL 60606
jenniferwu@stuart.iit.edu • (312) 333-4444

February 1, 2004

Ms. Francis Owen
Market Research Director
Smith, Bucklin & Associates, Inc.
401 N. Michigan Avenue
Chicago, IL 60611

Dear Ms. Owen,

I am a second year MBA student with an emphasis in Market Research and Strategic Marketing at the Illinois Institute of Technology, Stuart School of Business. I am writing to apply for the position of Market Research Associate at Smith, Bucklin & Associates, which I saw posted on Career Builder (Job #4510). Through my own research, I have learned more about your expansions into the health care arena in the Chicagoland area. As I am experienced in market research practices and have a strong interest in health care, I feel confident that I would be an effective member of your team.

My experiences include working as a market research analyst at the American Red Cross of Greater Chicago where I analyzed survey data using SPSS to better understand customer needs. My analysis required running statistical tests including chi-square, regression, and t-tests. I was also involved in developing recommendations based on my data findings on how to improve programming at the Red Cross. My experiences at the Red Cross motivated me to seek out full time opportunities in the health care field where I can contribute my understanding of current market research practices. I am excited to know that you are expanding your health care practice and am eager to be a member of your team.

I have attached my resume for your review. I would appreciate the opportunity to speak with you to discuss my interests and qualifications in more detail. Please feel free to contact me via e-mail at jenniferswu@stuart.iit.edu or by phone at 312-333-4444. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Handwritten Signature

Jennifer Wu

Enclosure

Sample Cover Letter 2

Prospecting Letter

(no specific job opening, but writing to express interest in opportunities at a company)

3030 N. Diversey Parkway, Apt. #2
Chicago, IL 60657
August 5, 2003

Mr. John Lawrence
Lynx Capital Partners, LLC
135 E. 57th Street
New York, NY 10022

Dear Mr. Lawrence,

I am a second year graduate student at the Illinois Institute of Technology – Stuart School of Business, pursuing and MS with an emphasis in Financial Engineering. With three years of experience as a trader and an enthusiasm for capital markets, I am confident that I would be an asset for Lynx Capital Markets.

While working at Piper Financial as a futures clerk, I assisted options traders in the process of buying and selling soybean futures. I was responsible for communicating market information from brokers to customers as well as maintaining daily records of futures positions. I found this experience to be exciting, fast-paced and dynamic. My experiences on the trading floor motivated me to pursue a Masters degree in Financial Markets. Through my coursework, I have acquired skills in regression modeling and asset valuation and have participated in mock trading simulations. I feel very certain that my skills and interests would be a good match for your trader-training program.

I have attached my resume for your review and would be interested in discussing my qualifications in more detail. I will contact you next week to see if there is a convenient time to meet in person. Please contact me at 773- 555-1212 or at tsmith@stuart.iit.edu should you have any questions about my background. I look forward to speaking with you. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

handwritten signature

Terence Smith

Enclosure

Sample Cover Letter 3
Personal Contact

SHALINI PATEL

1610 North Hinman Avenue #4Q • Evanston, IL 60210
spatel73@stuart.iit.edu • (847) 644-3553

August 8, 2003

Ms. Helaine Isaacs
Human Resources Manager
Madison Street Consulting Group
125 W. Madison Street
Chicago, IL 60606

Dear Ms. Isaacs,

Jennifer Garvin suggested I contact you, as I am interested in management consulting opportunities. I am a second year student at the Illinois Institute of Technology – Stuart School of Business, concentrating in Operations Management. With a background in business analysis and manufacturing, I feel very certain that my skills and interests would be a good fit for a position as a consultant at your firm.

While working as a financial analyst at Ford Motor Company, I developed strong analytical skills and an understanding of the manufacturing environment. For six months, I was part of a team that helped to implement a lean manufacturing process on the production floor. Through our efforts, we successfully implemented a new assembly process that led to an annual cost savings of \$50,000. I was also involved in training the hourly workers on how to understand the new Ford Production System. With a strong understanding of business, excellent presentation skills and experience working on quick turn-around projects, I am confident that I could be an effective member of your staff.

I have attached my resume for your review. Please contact me should you have any questions about my background or experiences. I can be reached at 847-644-3553 or by email at spatel73@stuart.iit.edu. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

handwritten signature

Shalini Patel

Enclosure

Sample Thank You Letter

50 West Elm Street #4A
Chicago, IL 60606

February 1, 2004

Ms. Francis Owen
Market Research Director
Smith, Bucklin & Associates, Inc.
401 N. Michigan Avenue
Chicago, IL 60611

Dear Ms. Owen,

Thank you very much for taking the time to interview me yesterday for the Marketing Associate position. I enjoyed meeting you and hearing about Smith Bucklin's plans to continue expanding its health care practice.

My enthusiasm for the position and my interest in working for SBA were strengthened as a result of our discussion. I truly enjoyed meeting the other members of your staff and would be excited to be a part of your team. Your company provides the opportunities I seek and I feel certain that my experiences and interests in market research will allow me to be a solid contributor to SBA. Please feel free to contact me at (312) 333-4444 should you require any additional information.

Thank you again for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Handwritten Signature

Jennifer Wu

Sample Networking emails/Requests for Informational Interviews

Dear Mr. Jones,

Samantha Smith suggested I contact you, as I am interested in consumer products marketing. I am a first year MBA student at the Stuart School of Business, concentrating in strategic marketing. I am currently evaluating different marketing career paths and would appreciate your insight and suggestions. Specifically, I am looking to get a better understanding of the day-to-day activities of a Brand Manager and also find out what skills are required to be successful in your field.

I will call you next week to see if we can arrange a brief meeting at your convenience. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,
Jonathan Keller

Dear Mr. Franklin,

We met last month at the PRMIA event in downtown Chicago. I wanted to follow up with you since you mentioned you have worked in both corporate finance and in risk management. You may recall that I am a finance student at the Stuart School of Business, Center for Financial Markets, concentrating in risk management.

I am currently exploring different career paths in finance and would appreciate your advice and insight. I would be interested in meeting with you briefly to learn more about your day-to-day activities and hear more about your experiences. Is there a day or time that is convenient for you?

Please feel free to contact me by e-mail at susant@stuart.iit.edu or on my home phone at 312-444-5555. I will call you next week to see if a meeting can be arranged. I look forward to seeing you again.

Best regards,
Susan Thompson