

UNIVERSITY OF THE  
**PACIFIC**  
Career Resource Center  
A Division of Student Life

# COVER LETTER HANDBOOK



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## GENERAL COVER LETTER GUIDELINES

The main purpose of the cover letter is to introduce yourself to the employer and to supplement and clarify the experience that you have listed on your resume. Do not underestimate the power of a good cover letter! A well-written cover letter can make a critical difference in an employer's estimate of your qualifications. An applicant with average qualifications may gain many interviews with a good cover letter, while a well-qualified candidate may defeat him or herself with a poorly written cover letter. If the position requires writing skills, you must have a superior letter. Remember, a strong cover letter will set you apart from applicants who have given it little attention. Be yourself, and have your letter reflect your professionalism, personality and style. Below are general guidelines to help you write an effective cover letter.

### Content

Your cover letter should include three sections: the opening or introduction paragraph, the body of the letter, and the closing paragraph. Following are some suggestions on what to include in each section.

#### **Introduction**

- State why you are writing the letter.
- Name the position for which you are applying.
- Mention how you heard about the opening or organization (i.e. Tiger Jobs, name of networking contact, Craigslist, etc.).
- Demonstrate your interest/enthusiasm for the position.

#### **Body**

- Explain why you are interested in the position with this organization and specify your reasons for desiring this type of work experience.
- Cite relevant education and experience - If you have had related academic or work experience (including paid, volunteer or extracurricular) be sure to point it out.
- Do not repeat your entire resume. Instead, state the value of your experiences, education, or personal qualities. Ask yourself "What have I learned from these experiences?" Then relate these experiences to the skills that you can provide to the employer.
- Emphasize what you can do for the employer, not how you will personally benefit from being hired for the job.
- Summarize your qualifications - Make sure to highlight and emphasize the particular skills, competencies and qualifications that relate directly to the duties and responsibility of the position.
- This section can be more than one paragraph.

## Closing

- Refer the reader to your enclosed resume.
- Have an appropriate closing that reiterates your interest in the position and the employer.
- Convey excitement and that you are looking forward to speaking with the employer at his or her earliest convenience.
- You can indicate the action or steps you will take to follow up.
- Thank the employer for their time.

## Format

### Appearance

- Do not make your reader squint! Use a font size that is legible (no smaller than 10 pt).
- Use a standard font such as Arial or Times. Use the same font as your resume to give a consistent and professional appearance.
- Try to leave at least one inch margins on your page.

### Layout

- A cover letter is written in business letter format.
- Most cover letters are in Block Style, which means they are aligned to the left margin of the page. There is also Modified Block style, where your return address is right aligned and the remaining letter is left aligned. (See examples of both under [Sample Cover Letters](#).)
- You should list your name and contact information at the top of the page. Another option is to use the same header as your resume.
- After your contact information, include the date you will be sending the letter.
- Next, list the name of the employer contact followed by the name of the company or organization and their full business address.
- It is best to address your letter to a specific person. Never use “To Whom It May Concern” or “Dear Sir/Madam.” (Read more about this in [The Targeted Letter](#) section).
- After the contact information and opening greeting, you should have an introductory paragraph followed by the body of your letter and finishing with the closing paragraph. (See [Content](#) section above)
- End your letter with “Sincerely” or “Regards” followed by your typed name. If you will be sending a hard copy of the letter, you will be expected to sign your name. Remember to leave enough space before your typed name to do this. If you will be sending your letter electronically, you do not need to worry about signing your name and your typed name will suffice.
- See [Sample Cover Letters](#) starting on page 9 for some examples of different types of layouts.

### Length

- Don't make your letter into a novel! To avoid rambling, remember to keep your letter relevant to the position.
- Try to keep your letter to one page. However, if you need to go to two pages make sure that you use at least a quarter of the second page. Again, make sure that you are including information that is relevant to the job for which you are applying.

### Language

- As this is a business letter, language should be formal and professional. Stay away from jargon, colloquialisms, acronyms and abbreviations.
- Be clear, concise, and focused.
- Avoid run-on sentences.
- Use a thesaurus to avoid repetitious words.

### Paper

- If you will be giving an employer a hard copy of your cover letter, make sure you print it out on the same paper that you are using for your resume, which is usually white or off-white and a little thicker than regular paper.

***\*\*Remember to have several people proofread your cover letter for grammar and spelling!***

## THE TARGETED LETTER

Employers are much more impressed with someone who has taken the time to write a letter specific to their internship or job opening and organization. You should always research the company and read the job description or job posting. Think about why you want to work for this particular employer and how your experience relates to the job.

- Write to a specific person. If you don't know to whom you should address the letter, call the company and inquire or use your networking contacts.
- Analyze the job description or job posting. It is helpful to highlight the specific skills and qualifications desired by the employer. Then you can choose which of your skills and experiences are most closely related to what the employer is seeking and write about them in the body of your letter.
- Emphasize your skills and qualifications that are most relevant to the position to show why you are a good fit for the employer.

## **ADDITIONAL LETTERS**

Described below are additional types of letters that you might find useful.

### **Thank You Letters**

Thank you letters are an important part of the job search process. Managers have been known to make final hiring decisions based on which candidate sent a thank you letter! You should always use thank you letters after informational interviews and job interviews. You should also send a thank you to anyone that gives you advice, information or referrals.

You can also use thank you letters to help you network. They are a great reason to write someone you recently met in order to continue or maintain your new contact. For example, if you go to an information session or career fair and meet an employer with whom you would like to keep in touch, it is a great idea to write them a letter to show your appreciation for the time they spent speaking with you.

Remember to write the letter as soon as possible and to personalize it by referring to your discussion.

### **Approach Letter**

An approach letter is used as a networking tool, usually to request an informational interview or an informal meeting to discuss career possibilities. Most approach letters are written to a specific contact person. This type of letter can be similar to a cover letter if the basic purpose is to get career-related information or opportunities, or to maintain networking contacts. Approach letters can also be used as follow-up letters to contacts that you would like to keep in your professional network.

### **Statement of Purpose/Personal Statement**

The Statement of Purpose, or Personal Statement, is usually used when applying to graduate school and should not be confused with a cover letter. A cover letter is written to an employer and is focused on your skills and qualifications pertaining to a specific job opportunity. A Statement of Purpose is typically a personal essay that informs the graduate school selection committee about who you are, what interests you have, what has influenced you in your life and what plans you have for the future. If you need help writing a Statement of Purpose, call the Career Resource Center to make an appointment with a Career Counselor.

# SAMPLE COVER LETTERS



## General Content & Format

Your Name  
Address  
City, State, Zip Code  
Telephone Number  
Email Address

Date

Name of Contact Person  
Title of Contact Person  
Company/Organization Name  
Address  
City, State, Zip Code

Dear Mr./Ms. Contact Person's Last Name:

**Opening Paragraph:** State why you are writing the letter. Name the position or type of experience for which you are applying, and mention how you heard about the opening or organization (i.e. Tiger Jobs, name of networking contact, Craigslist, etc.).

**Middle Section:** Explain why you are interested in the position with this organization and specify your reasons for desiring this type of work experience. If you have had related coursework in your major or relevant experience (including paid, volunteer or extracurricular) be sure to point it out, but do not reiterate your entire resume. This section can be more than one paragraph.

**Closing Paragraph:** Refer the reader to your enclosed resume. Have an appropriate closing to pave the way for an interview by indicating the action or steps you will take to follow up. Thank the employer for their time.

Sincerely,

(Signature)

Your Name Typed



## Block Style

### Sample: Full-time Opportunity Posted on Tiger Jobs

1214 Fulton Street  
San Francisco, CA 94118  
(209) 563-9684  
r\_snyder4@pacific.edu

July 1, 2008

Margaret Ferrin  
McMaster-Carr Supply Co.  
9630 Norwalk Boulevard  
San Francisco, CA 90670

Dear Ms. Ferrin:

I am responding to your posting in Tiger Jobs for a Marketing Researcher. I am currently a senior at the University of the Pacific, graduating in May with Bachelor's degree in English. What I offer to McMaster-Carr is curiosity, a passion for learning, and practical research and writing skills that would enable me to be an effective and dynamic member of your catalog production team. I welcome the creative challenge of promoting your company's commitment to customer service and to providing a comprehensive array of mechanical supplies in an efficient manner.

My experience relevant to market research and catalog creation includes taking difficult inconsistent and often technical information and turning it into clear, benefit-oriented copy that is useful to both the casual user and a more professional audience. During my years at the University of the Pacific, I honed my ability to conduct thorough research upon which to base concise and accurate written summaries.

Along with my academic writing pursuit, I have gained firsthand training and experience in a business environment through my internship with the Larsen Literary Agency. In this capacity, I corresponded with major clients in the publishing industry, maintained the agency's contract files, read and edited manuscripts from writers, and established a reputable contact list of such publishers as Random House, W.W. Norton, Chronicle Books LLC, and Farrar, Strauss & Giroux. In my three months with the agency, I received feedback that my professionalism and excellent follow-through skills contributed significant value and energy to the team.

The Marketing Researcher position with McMaster-Carr is a challenge I am prepared and enthusiastic to meet. I would like to further discuss my qualifications and will follow up with you next week. I look forward to learning more about his unique employment opportunity.

Respectfully,

Rick Snyder

## Sample: Internship Position through Networking Contact

141 March Lane  
Stockton CA 95211

February 17, 2009

Toby Suckow  
Talent Manager  
Rockin' Roots Club  
453 Columbus Ave  
San Francisco, CA 94122

Dear Ms. Suckow,

I received your name and contact information from Lauri Mills, and I am writing to express my interest in the internship opportunity at the Rockin' Roots Club. I feel that both my academic and work experience make me an excellent candidate for this position.

I am a junior at the University of the Pacific earning my degree in Business Administration, Arts and Entertainment Management with a minor in Film Studies. My academic coursework has given me a strong foundation and understanding of both general business management and arts and entertainment. I am currently working on a project in my Market Research class on the use of online social networking sites as a means to market campus events.

In addition to my academic background, I have 3 years of experience in working in various aspects of the entertainment industry. I am the Arts and Entertainment Programmer for the Associated Students which involves scheduling and coordinating concerts, lectures, and other entertainment events on campus. This has given me the opportunity to enhance my leadership and organizational skills as well as increase my knowledge of marketing and promotion. I have also learned how to interact with guest performers and their representatives in a professional manner.

I feel my passion and knowledge of music will be an asset to your club. I have experience with radio, both as a DJ for my campus radio station and as a student representative for 209Vibe. I have worked in a retail music store where I gained a new perspective regarding the breadth of musical preferences and how to best advertise to a diverse clientele. Finally, I am the President of the Music Management Club on campus. In this capacity, I help fellow students connect with the music industry through guest speakers, fundraisers, concerts, and organized trips.

I have enclosed my resume for your review. I am very excited about this internship and I look forward to speaking with you further about my skills and qualifications. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

John Harper

## Sample: Full-time Opportunity Posted on Tiger Jobs

### Jean Louise Finch

jlfinch@gmail.com  
<http://gallery.me.com/jlfinch/projects>

350 Third Street  
Sacramento, CA 95020  
916-632-7526

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August 18, 2008

Thomas Robinson  
Vice President of Operations  
Wireless Solutions, Inc.  
3578 Tucker Road  
Sacramento, CA 95026

Dear Mr. Robinson:

It was a pleasure to meet you yesterday at the University of the Pacific Career & Internship Faire. As we discussed, I am extremely interested in the Technical Assistant position with Wireless Solutions, Inc. I am graduating in May with my Bachelor's of Science in Computer Science with a minor in Business Management.

A degree in Computer Science gives me distinguished domain knowledge in information technology. The first domain is software design and implementation. I am most proficient in C/C++ and Java, but my experience gives me the ability to pick up any software language and adapt to client solutions.

Over the last year, I have worked on two network applications that give the best demonstration of my skills. The first was my senior project, where I designed a multithreaded peer-to-peer instant messenger application, written in Java, using UDP protocols. The purpose was to allow users to communicate with other users on the same network and to chain different networks together. The second project included a network device driver and service for Independent Study credit. For this project, I modified an existing Microsoft project called VirtualWifi. The purpose was to improve Microsoft's experimental open source code for other wireless adapters and reduce packet loss. Both projects can be found on my website: <http://gallery.me.com/jlfinch/projects>.

The second domain knowledge I possess includes an understanding of business management and organization. The Computer Information Systems coursework included business classes which included semester projects for a team of students. These projects gave me an understanding of financial, project, and team management. For example, in my Corporate Finance course, my role in my group was to determine the weighted average cost of capital of PG&E to determine how well the company is doing for 2008.

During my senior year, I have done seasonal contract work at CFC Insurance Marketing where I gained ASP, Microsoft Access, SQL skills. In this role, I designed web interfaces in ASP with SQL and Microsoft Access queries, for about five marketers. The purpose of the web interface was for the marketers to maintain a database of 4000 agents.

I also interned at Guess Inc. where I gained valuable troubleshooting and communication skills. In this role, I performed helpdesk support including password resets, general desktop and printer troubleshooting, and moving computer equipment across the GUESS campus.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I hope to have the opportunity to discuss this opening with you in person.

Sincerely,

Jean Louise Finch

## Modified Block Style

### Sample: Music Alumna, Unknown Contact

April Wheeler  
2497 Willow Dr. Apt. 32  
Los Angeles, CA 90014  
562.826.7432  
awheeler@gmail.com

Human Resources  
Laurel Players Theater Group  
496 North Beecher Street  
Los Angeles, CA 90020

November 2, 2008

Dear Selection Committee,

I am very interested in the position of Marketing Assistant with the Laurel Players Theater Group. I have a strong background in performing arts administration and am eager to seek employment that is in line with my career goals and experience. As a recent graduate, my interest in this position is unique in that I am not solely seeking a job but am hoping to gain knowledge and form a career path in theatrical marketing. I believe my recent graduation offers a fresh perspective on internet networking and can present new ideas for reaching a younger audience with similar interests.

I hold a Bachelor of Arts in Music and have over two years of experience assisting the Technical Director of the Conservatory of Music at the University of the Pacific. In this position, I took part in publicity campaigns for performances while providing administrative support to both the technical team and the Dean of the Conservatory. Through this experience, I have developed valuable skills in organization, advertising, meeting deadlines, multi-tasking, and prioritizing. I believe these skills are directly transferable to the Marketing Assistant position.

I will be an asset to your marketing team as I have significant experience and a strong passion for the performing arts. My motivation throughout college, earning high marks, being involved in performances, working in the administration, and taking part in extracurricular activities, is exemplary of my overall work ethic in the field of arts administration. Working in Patron Services for the Los Angeles Symphony, I have developed excellent customer service and communication skills; and my experience in the box office gives me a strong foundation in coordinating opening nights and other special events for the theater. Other basic qualifications include familiarity with Microsoft Office programs, knowledge of computer ticketing systems, fluency in Spanish, fast and accurate typing, and experience with database entry.

I am a valuable candidate as I am a quick learner, dedicated, proactive, and eager to gain knowledge and experience in theatrical marketing. Thank you for considering my application and I look forward to receiving your response.

Sincerely,

April Wheeler

## Thank You Letter

Christine Williams  
21 Via Street  
Stockton, CA 95308  
cpwilliams@yahoo.com  
209.552.0326

November 7, 2008

Ms. Jane Baxter  
Vice President, Commercial Banking  
Central Bank  
25 South Street  
Stockton CA 95206

Dear Ms. Baxter,

I really enjoyed meeting with you yesterday to discuss opportunities in your Commercial Banking Division. I was especially interested in hearing about your planned expansion and ideas concerning outreach to the small businesses.

My experience working for a number of small service businesses in Stockton while completing my degree has made me particularly sensitive to the unique needs of small business owners. As you learned from our conversation, I have also worked as a teller at Central Bank and thus understand the bank's commitment to high quality customer service.

Thank you again for taking the time to meet with me. I remain very interested in the Commercial Banking Representative position. I am confident that my skills and experience would be a valuable addition to your team. I look forward to hearing from you soon

Sincerely,

Christine Williams

## Approach Letter

2240 Fulton Street  
San Francisco, CA 94122

January 8, 2009

Timothy Jacobs  
Associate  
The Benjamin Group  
400 Fremont Street  
San Francisco, CA 94104

Dear Mr. Jacobs:

It was nice meeting you last weekend at the Public Relations Society of America seminar. I particularly enjoyed your presentation on networking strategies and have decided to put some of those suggestions to use for myself. As you know, I will be graduating from University of the Pacific with a Bachelor's degree in Communication in May, and I am just beginning my job search. I am most interested in beginning a career in public relations within a private firm, and I would appreciate any assistance you might be able to provide. Highlights of my background follow along with a resume for your review.

Currently, I am an intern at XYZ Software Inc. where I am responsible for communicating with vendors and clients over the telephone and in person. Several projects which I look forward to this semester include: writing a newsletter to inform company executives of our latest projects, performing research for a diverse group of clients including advertising and media, and leading a project for my Communication class combining resources from my internship and research data. In addition, I am working part-time as a Pacific Ambassador on campus where I lead tours for prospective students and parents.

I continue to be excited about beginning a career in Public Relations. My education, internship experience and campus work have prepared me with excellent oral and written communication skills as well as great attention to detail.

I will be contacting you soon to further discuss my job search. I appreciate any advice or contacts you may be willing to share.

Sincerely,

Jason Wong  
[j\\_wong@pacific.edu](mailto:j_wong@pacific.edu)  
209.332.3658

## COVER LETTER CHECKLIST

### IS YOUR COVER LETTER...

- Targeted and addressed to a specific person? Make sure to spell the individual's name correctly and remember that you should never use "To whom it may concern." If you cannot find contact information, address your letter to "Dear Hiring Manager" or "Dear Selection Committee."
- Focused, clear and concise? Did you avoid rambling or run on sentences?
- Formatted like a business letter?
- 100% honest. Do not stretch the truth!

### DOES YOUR COVER LETTER...

- Expand on your resume and speak more about your skills and experiences relevant to the specific position?
- Explain to the employer why you think you are a fit for that particular position and how you will be an asset to the organization?
- Represent your communication and writing skills? Did you use proper grammar, avoid spelling errors, and use professional language?
- Communicate your interest and enthusiasm for the position and the company/organization?

### A FEW MORE TIPS...

- Have you used transition phrases and topic sentences to improve the flow of the letter between paragraphs?
- Have you written your letter in a style which conveys self-confidence in your abilities?
- Don't be afraid to express your skills. Be proud of your accomplishments!
- Proofread! Proofread! Proofread! Employers will catch the little mistakes which will reflect poorly on you. Call the Career Resource Center and make an appointment to have your cover letter reviewed by a Career Counselor!