

COVER LETTER GUIDE

THE BEST WAY TO MAKE A
FIRST IMPRESSION!
RULES, FORMAT, PHRASES, EXAMPLES



Radford University
Career Services
(540) 831-5373
www.radford.edu/Careers

**CAREER
CENTER**

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The Rules

The purpose of a cover letter is to introduce you, get your resume read, and arrange an interview. Send a cover letter with every resume and **tailor it to match the targeted employer.**



- ✚ Clearly describe ways you will contribute. After reading the job description, outline specific examples of how your qualifications will match the company's needs. Stress benefits for the employer. Provide strengths that set you apart from other candidates.
- ✚ Keep it Short. Employers may be sorting through dozens of applications. Aim for three brief paragraphs and never exceed one page.
- ✚ Explain why you want the job (without begging). Ask yourself how the position fits into your career goals and what you find exciting about the field. A genuine show of enthusiasm and knowledge will set you apart from others.
- ✚ Match, but don't restate your resume. Highlight and summarize items on your resume that are the most pertinent to the employer. Explain ways you will add value to the company.
- ✚ Be professional; don't be a comedian, don't get really personal, and don't use cheesy sales lines.
- ✚ Be positive; don't apologize. Your job is to convince the employer you are qualified. If you think the position is out of your reach, focus on your transferable skills and diverse qualifications.
- ✚ Avoid using the word "I" too much.
- ✚ If asked for salary requirements, state a range (e.g. \$30,000 - \$35,000). Employers use this to weed out applicants with unrealistic salary requests. Know the average salary for the position.
- ✚ Close with a commitment to action. Follow up after sending a resume to ensure they have received all necessary materials and set up a possible interview.
- ✚ Proofread; using a spell checker is not enough. Also, cut out all unnecessary words and phrases – then, go through and do it again. Make sure every word in your letter (and resume) has a purpose and is adding value.
- ✚ Use the same good quality stationary as your resume. Make sure the envelope is professional as well. Consider printing labels as opposed to handwriting addresses.

Cover Letter Phrases

Opening Phrases

- ▶ Upon reading your advertisement in the (NY Times), I was very excited to learn of your need for a (Manager). Your (comprehensive) approach to (.....) is very impressive.
- ▶ I am very interested in the (Manager) position advertised in the (NY Times). I am familiar with (Any company) and would love the opportunity to contribute to your efforts.
- ▶ I was very excited to read about the opening for a (Business Consultant) in the latest edition of the (NY Times). I would like to submit my resume as an application for this opportunity.
- ▶ I read your company's description in the (NY Times) and am interested in learning about employment opportunities in your (management training) program.
- ▶ (Jennifer Smith) suggested that I Contact you regarding your search for a (Graphic Artist).
- ▶ Your advertisement for an experienced (designer) prompted me to contact you. I feel that the position fits well with my educational background, experience, and career interests.
- ▶ I am in search of an opportunity in (materials management) within the (health-care) field and would like to inquire about the possibility of joining your (management) team.
- ▶ Your advertisement in the (NY Times) is of great interest to me. I feel that I have the qualifications necessary to effectively handle the responsibility of (Business Consultant).
- ▶ My interest in pursuing and expanding my professional career in (law enforcement) has prompted me to respond to your advertisement in the (NY Times).

Cover Letter Phrases (cont.)

Main Phrases

- ▶ Upon graduating from (school) with a (type of degree or certification) degree in (area of study), I am eager to earn some practical experience and apply my skills.
- ▶ I am motivated to spend my summer gaining valuable practical experience in (industry). I would be a very enthusiastic and hardworking addition to your organization. I learn very quickly and believe in my ability to get the job done.
- ▶ As a (volunteer, tutor, fundraiser, etc.) I have developed my skills in (team motivation, project management, etc.) I am known for (following through on commitments, paying attention to details, being well organized, etc.)
- ▶ I'm most at home in a high-energy workplace with ambitious, goal-oriented people, compassionate, service-oriented people.
- ▶ My background in ___ would be an asset to your company's work in...
- ▶ My previous experience in ___ would complement your firm's (strategy, goals, etc.)
- ▶ One of my proudest professional accomplishments was... My resume further substantiates my qualifications, education, experience and references.
- ▶ I'm motivated to be part of an organization that values commitment to excellence, team efforts, and individual initiative.
- ▶ My skills in ___ seem to be an excellent fit with the hiring criteria mentioned in your ad.
- ▶ At this point in my career, I believe I can make a significant contribution to (Company), both in the areas of ___ and ___. I am a results-oriented professional who regards principle, balance and professionalism as strategic components of my business philosophy.



Closing Phrases

- ▶ The enclosed resume describes my qualifications for the (Manager) position.
- ▶ Please consider my request for a personal interview to discuss my qualifications.
- ▶ I would appreciate an opportunity to meet with you and further discuss the position and my ability to meet your needs.
- ▶ I will contact you next week to see if we can arrange a time to discuss my qualifications in person.
- ▶ Please contact me if you have any questions regarding my application.
- ▶ I can be reached by phone at (434) 555-5555, weekdays between 1p.m. and 5p.m. You may also leave a message and I will return your call as soon as possible.
- ▶ Should you need to reach me, please feel free to call me at (434) 555-5555.
- ▶ Thank you for your consideration. I look forward to talking with you.

Cover Letter Format



Your Address
City, State Zip
Your Phone Number

Date

Interviewer's Name
Title
Company Name
Address
City, State Zip

Dear Interviewer's Name (try not to use sir, madam, or to whom it may concern):

Clearly state the job **title/position and how you found out about the opportunity**. State who you are and the purpose of the letter. State what attracted you to the position, **field of work**, or organization. Commend them on something; flatter them and demonstrate your knowledge of their company.

Highlight your qualifications that relate to the employer's needs. Emphasize the benefits you bring to the organization. This can be done in paragraph form or a bulleted list. Refer to key aspects of your resume, but **don't restate your resume**; if anything, expand on it.

Reiterate your interest and **request an interview**. Offer to contact the employer, preferably within a week of submitting your resume. Possibly mention **dates or times** that you are available. Be flexible and accommodating to the employer's needs. **Thank the reader** for taking time to consider you as an applicant.

Sincerely,

(handwritten signature)

Your typed name

(List enclosures if you haven't mentioned them in the body of the letter.)

Enclosures: Resume
References

Cover Letter Guide

Example

707 G Howe Street
Radford, VA 24141
July 17, 2008

Mr. Richard Webster
Vice-President, Marketing
Pure Life, Inc.
P.O. Box 4250
Richmond, VA 23261

Dear Mr. Webster:

Enclosed you will find my resume as application for an internship in Marketing with your organization. I am currently a student at Radford University and Dr. Kathryn Jordan, Director of Career Services, has referred your opportunity to me. I am searching for a "For Credit/Paid" opportunity for Summer 2008.

As my resume indicates, I will be receiving my B.S. in Marketing in May 2009. I am in search of an internship that will provide me with an opportunity to explore diverse areas of the marketing field. With former sales and retail experience, I am recognized for my leadership ability, strong customer service, and a talent for working with diverse groups of people. Additionally, I am motivated to learn the numerous aspects of sales and marketing operations in business and industry.

I would like to contact you in a few days regarding receipt of my resume and credentials and to discuss the next step in applying for an internship with Pure Life. I look forward to your positive response and in the meantime, please feel free to forward my resume to interested parties within your organization.

Sincerely,

"YOUR SIGNATURE"

Your Typed Name

Enclosure

Cover Letter Guide

Example (cont.)

John Student
1234 University Way
Radford, VA 24141
(434) 555-5555

January 1, 2008

Joy Clancey
Director
28825 Franklin Blvd.
Indianapolis, TX 78247

Dear Ms. Clancey:

The accompanying resume is in response to your listing in the _____ for a _____. I am especially interested in the position because my experience with _____ has prepared me to understand the needs and problems of the business community from the perspective of _____. I wish to use this experience with a _____ (company accomplishment) firm such as yours.

I have been searching for a position that allows me to grow in my career and advance in learning and responsibility. I believe the skills you have stated in your advertisement are a perfect match for my professional strengths.

I would appreciate your taking the time to review the enclosed resume. I will contact you early next week to set up a time to meet.

Sincerely,

(signed name)

Typed name

