

# COVER LETTERS

Tufts Career Services

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## What's the point of a cover letter?

- *To customize your background for a specific job.* It guides the reader by summarizing the skills and experiences relevant to a particular opportunity.
- *To demonstrate your research, writing, and analytical skills.* It allows you to communicate your knowledge of the employer, industry, and career field.
- *To convey your motivation and professionalism.* It reflects your personality, enthusiasm, and interest in the position.

## Do letters need to be customized?

Yes! Effective cover letters are marketing tools and as such, they should be written with a reader's specific needs in mind. Where your resume is concise and standardized, your cover letters are customized. You may have one or two resumes, but you'll need to tailor a letter for *each* employment opportunity. Its quality can mean the difference between an employer's quick glance or closer scrutiny. Tempted to use a generic letter? *Consider this:* Recruiters say they typically spend less than 30 seconds skimming a candidate's correspondence. Make sure you quickly catch their attention with your carefully crafted and compelling communication.

Since so much recruitment is done online today, it is acceptable to send your cover letter electronically and should be sent both as an attachment and pasted directly into the body of an email. Regardless of the method, it should still be one page or less and maintain the same formality and quality as if you were turning in an important term paper. *Warning:* don't adopt the casual stream-of-consciousness of email!

## 8 easy tips for cover letters

- **Address a specific person.** A quick telephone call to an employer can help determine the name and correct spelling of your recipient. If you can't get this information, address the letter to "Dear Hiring Manager" or "Dear Human Resource Manager." Another suggestion is to use a subject line in place of the salutation (i.e., APPLICATION FOR THE SOCIAL SERVICES POSITION.) Avoid salutations such as "Dear Sir," "Dear Madam," or "To Whom It May Concern."
- **Keep it brief.** Limit the letter to one page. *Remember:* a cover letter is intended to complement your resume, not repeat its content. Three to four paragraphs is sufficient.
- **Match yourself to the opportunity.** Effective cover letters are accomplishment-oriented and focus on specific skills and abilities. Rather than claiming to be "competent" and "qualified," cite examples and make an effort to link them to the job requirements.

- **Demonstrate your interest.** Show what you've learned about the organization and/or industry. This is where your research and networking will pay off. Where appropriate, use the vocabulary of a specific discipline or industry.
- **Write in your own style.** You can adopt a conversational tone as long as your writing is flawless and grammatically correct. Avoid overused statements such as "Enclosed please find my resume for your review." Use the active voice and powerful verbs for lively communication.
- **Put yourself in the reader's position.** Count the number of sentences that you began with the word, "I." Then edit! Downplay "I" and "me" and focus on the reader by using the word "you" as often as possible. Communicate what you can contribute to the reader's organization, rather than what you expect to get.
- **Pay attention to detail.** Employers value effective and careful communicators, and your writing skills are displayed in your cover letter. Grammar, spelling, or typographical errors will send you to the 'discard' pile. Ask an expert to proofread your letter for content, clarity, and correctness. *Tip for emails:* write in a Word document and then paste it into your email.
- **First impressions count.** The average employer receives over 200,000 letters annually from job applicants. Get yours noticed with these tips:
  - Type your letter using the same font as your resume. Keep it simple (e.g., Times New Roman, 12 point).
  - If you're using a hard copy, print it on the same stock of paper as your resume. White or off-white color is preferable.
  - Sign a hard copy letter with blue or black ink.

### **How do I follow-up after sending a letter?**

Successful job applicants follow-up their cover letters and resumes with a phone call or email within 5-10 days of delivery to a potential employer. If you can't reach the original recipient by phone or online, send a follow-up letter about the status of your application and expressing your continued interest.

### **Are there other types of letters used in the job search?**

Most job search correspondence can be categorized as follows: (For samples of these letters, please see the "Cover Letter" section of our website.)

1. *Cover Letter:* a letter of application written in response to a job opening or internship
2. *Letter of Inquiry:* unsolicited communication to explore possible openings
3. *Thank you Notes:* follow-up communication after an interview or networking opportunity
4. *Acceptance Letter:* confirming your acceptance or rejection of an offer
5. *Networking Email:* asking for information or a networking meeting

## ***Sample Cover Letter Format***

Your Street Address  
City, State, Zip  
Current Date [4 returns]

Name  
Title or Position  
Department  
Company  
Street Address  
City, State, Zip [2 returns]

Dear Dr./Mr./Ms. Last Name: [2 returns]

**Why Them? Attract attention.** Make the match between you and the position or organization. Avoid standard opening sentences such as, "Please accept this letter as application for the Cost Accountant position with your company." State why you are writing and the name of the position. Indicate how you heard of the opening, and mention any mutual acquaintances or referring parties by name. If you are inquiring about potential opportunities, describe the type of position you are seeking. Personalize the letter by expressing an interest in *this* particular employer and illustrate you have done some research about the organization.

**Why You? Sell yourself.** Expand upon your qualifications for the position. Pick out the most relevant qualifications listed on your resume and discuss them in detail by demonstrating how your background and experience qualify you for the job. Be as specific as possible, and refer the reader to your resume for additional information.

**What's next? Close the letter.** Restate your interest in the opportunity and request an interview. Indicate that you will telephone to follow-up. Then make sure you do! Employers will appreciate your initiative and motivation. [2 returns]

Sincerely, [4 returns]

*(Sign your name here)*

Your typed name [2 returns]

Enclosure

***Sample Cover Letter for a Job (accompanies resume)***

7 Mountain Street  
Somerville, MA 02144

April 15, 2006

Ms. Gillian Wood  
May Institute  
10 Acton Street  
Arlington, MA 02416

Dear Ms. Wood:

As a senior at Tufts University, I am writing to apply for the Teacher's Aide position in Arlington, MA (Job Code: W-TEA-COR), an opportunity I learned about on the May Institute's website. My interest in working with the May Institute began last fall when I met a representative at the Tufts Career Fair. Since then, I have confirmed this interest through my research and today I can offer you the benefit of my experiences teaching and working, both with children and young adults.

Through my studies as a Clinical Psychology Major at Tufts University, I have had the opportunity to learn, in a structured environment, a great deal about child development and psychology. As a student, writing reports, researching, and collecting data were tasks that I successfully performed on a regular basis. Your position also calls for parent contact. In my work tutoring and mentoring students both in the United States and abroad, I communicated regularly with parents of my students.

What may be of more relevance to you is my experience interning and working as a Paraprofessional at the SEEK Program in the Somerville School District. SEEK (Socio-Emotional Education at the Kennedy) is a special needs program focusing on students with emotional, behavioral and learning disabilities and disorders, as well as on students with other disabilities. Interning and working at the SEEK Program, I have had the opportunity to develop skills and abilities such as strong behavior management techniques, effective interviewing skills, and constructive teaching methods. Working with the students and staff of this special needs program and learning the theories and applications of the Crisis Prevention Institute has also emphasized the importance of focusing instruction on life skills and issues of problem solving, patience, control, and safety.

I am eager to discuss your position and to learn more about the May Institute. I will call you in the next few days to follow up and see if it is appropriate to arrange an interview. In the meantime, I can be reached at (617) 555-1212. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

*Danielle Lieberman* (signature)

Danielle Lieberman

***Sample Cover Letter for a Job (accompanies resume)***

**Hillary Duff**  
99 Beacon Street  
Medford, MA 02155

May 1, 2006

Larry Carr  
Manager  
Creative Realities  
29 Commonwealth Avenue  
Boston, MA 02116

Dear Mr. Carr:

Your Associate Consultant position demands the skills, aptitudes, and work ethic that I have developed as a scholar-athlete at Tufts University. A recent graduate with a double major in Economics and International Relations, I am eager to leverage my internship and academic experience to contribute to your bottom line.

Based on my understanding of your position and your organization, here are the aspects of my background that seem most relevant to meet your needs:

- *Analytical thinking and creative problems-solving skills, cultivated through a rigorous curriculum expanded beyond my majors to include computer science;*
- *“Real world” experience with Capital Advisors Group, developing spreadsheets for portfolio management, quarterly performance templates for clients, and PowerPoint presentations for external and internal use;*
- *Successful research and writing for coursework, as evidenced by 3.57 GPA and numerous academic honors; and*
- *Leadership, collaboration, and conflict resolution skills, based on membership with the Tufts Women’s Basketball team.*

As you seek a candidate who can adapt and contribute to your different research and consulting teams, I hope you will consider my credentials. I can be contacted at 617-552-1212 or [hillary.duff@tufts.edu](mailto:hillary.duff@tufts.edu). Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

*Hillary Duff* (signature)

Hillary Duff

***Sample Cover Letter for a Job (accompanies resume)***

100 College Avenue  
Somerville, MA 02144  
February 13, 2006

Jane Smith  
Human Resources Manager  
Boston Engineering Corporation  
Boston, MA 02136

Dear Ms. Smith

I am eager to join your company as a Software Engineer because I realize that Boston Engineering Corporation's commitment to developing excellent products creates a challenging yet rewarding work environment. My undergraduate concentration in Computer Science complements BEC's focus on producing innovative software technology. Working as a Software Engineer for BEC, I foresee opportunities to combine my interest in computer science with software design skills while gaining hands-on experience in the technology industry.

Through professional internships and my academic coursework, I have acquired skills and experiences highly relevant to the Software Engineer position at BEC:

- My work as a content developer for various Boston-area companies has fostered my ability to work both independently and in a team setting.
- Assisting with the Tufts University Child & Family Web Guide provided me with the opportunity to experience the dynamics of a development team while working in a professional environment.
- During my course of study at Tufts, I have not only achieved proficiency with programming languages such as HTML and C++, but I have also mastered several technology packages.

My internship and coursework in object-oriented programming skills, coupled with my enthusiasm to help others and learn from experience, make me a distinctive candidate for the Software Engineer employment opportunity at Boston Engineering Corporation. Thank you for considering my application. I look forward to interviewing with you and demonstrating the match between your needs and my talents. I will email you next week to follow up. In the meantime, please do not hesitate to contact me at (617) 627-1234 or [Emily.Brown@tufts.edu](mailto:Emily.Brown@tufts.edu) if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

*Emily Brown* (signature)

Emily Brown

***Sample Cover Letter for a Job (accompanies resume)***

*Wilma W. Whale*  
*33 Symbiotic Way*  
*Coral Reef, FL 22017*

May 7, 2006

Janice Howell  
Houghton Mifflin Company  
12 Commonwealth Avenue  
Boston, MA 02987

Dear Ms. Howell,

As a May 2006 graduate of Tufts University, I have developed an understanding of children's literature through my extracurricular involvement in children's theatre. Through this work, I have discovered a passion that aligns with the mission of your organization. Based on this shared value, as well as my experiences performing and interacting with children, I am applying for a production assistant position at Houghton Mifflin.

Much of my time at Tufts was devoted to working with the Traveling Treasure Trunk, a student-run children's theater group that performs for elementary and preschool students in the Boston area. Throughout the creation process, whether developing scripts, learning roles, or warming up before a show, the focus was always on how to communicate a positive message in a way that would be fun and exciting for the audience.

One major part of the creation process was developing plays by adapting children's stories or by brainstorming original ideas. As a member of the troupe and as its president, I had the opportunity to both create two plays and work with others to help develop their ideas into workable theater pieces. This written aspect is one of the elements I hope to further pursue through a position at Houghton Mifflin.

This spring I am working as an intern for the Horn Book Guide and Magazine. Working for such a prestigious editorial publication has allowed me to develop an in depth background in children's literature and publishing which I believe will aid me in my work as a production assistant. It has also given me an understanding of the importance of quality reading materials in elementary education, something that is clearly a focus of the publishing at Houghton Mifflin.

Thank you for considering me for this position. If you have any questions you can contact me at (617) 552-1212 or by email at [Wilma.Whale@gmail.com](mailto:Wilma.Whale@gmail.com). I look forward to speaking with you in the near future.

Sincerely,

*Wilma W. Whale* (signature)

Wilma W. Whale

***Sample Cover Letter for an Internship (accompanies resume)***

5 Banister Boulevard  
Medford, MA, 02155  
November 28, 2005

Ms. Brandy Whine  
Human Resources/LDP  
Lockheed Martin Corporation  
6801 Rockledge Dr.  
MP 362  
Bethesda, MD 20817

Dear Ms. Whine,

I would like take this opportunity to apply for a 2006 summer intern position at Lockheed Martin. Having read Popular Science since I was quite young, I have always seen the Lockheed Martin name associated with aircraft, defense and other technological advancements. I had the opportunity to speak with a fellow Tufts student who was a summer intern at Lockheed Martin in 2005. She had a rewarding experience working in Orlando and enjoyed the hands-on opportunities that were available to her. I am excited about the possibility of being an intern with such a company.

Last summer I worked for a small research company. Currently, I am working on a research project for Professor Gary Leisk of the Tufts University Mechanical Engineering Department. Both of these experiences were very rewarding to me, but did not afford me exposure to working in a large corporate environment. It would be a great experience to witness, firsthand, the structure that makes up a large company such as Lockheed Martin and to be an integrate member working with other departments in order to accomplish a greater goal.

I am eager to further discuss the opportunities that Lockheed Martin has to offer. If you have any questions or require any additional information, please feel free to contact me at (617) 653-7007 or by e-mail [paul.carroll@tufts.edu](mailto:paul.carroll@tufts.edu).

Thank you for your consideration. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

*Paul Carroll* (signature)

Paul Carroll

Enclosure



*Sample Cover Letter for an Internship (accompanies resume)*

25 International House  
Tufts University  
Medford, MA 02155  
October 5, 2006

Marybeth Luciano  
Internship Coordinator  
Internship Program  
Arnold Worldwide  
101 Huntington Ave.  
Boston, MA 02199

Dear Ms. Luciano:

Through recent meetings with Tufts alumni who work on the Amtrak campaign, I've had the opportunity to explore my interest in advertising and in particular, Arnold Worldwide. I have learned about the different roles of Arnolds' various departments and refined my interest to focus more specifically on brand planning. As a result, I am applying for your internship in brand planning which is posted on MonsterTrak.

As a Political Science major I am well aware of the significance and power of public opinion. Knowing the trends, habits, and opinions of the public serves the astute politician as well as the savvy brand planner.

In an entirely different role, my experience at Starbucks has not only taught me to brew excellent coffee, but has also developed an awareness of the effectiveness of marketing techniques. As a barista, I was privy to the consumer's opinion of Starbucks and observed its effects on the corporation and vice-versa. In yet another arena, while interning at a branch office of NASA, I familiarized myself with administrative operations and concurrently learned the importance of integration and effective communication. I feel that this combination of educational and occupational experience will be a positive addition to Arnold.

The prospect of exploring the business of advertising with Boston's top firm represents a new challenge to complement my academic pursuits and career interests. I hope you will want to learn more about my brand by contacting me at (617) 627-1127 or [becca.wong@tufts.edu](mailto:becca.wong@tufts.edu). Thank you for considering me.

Sincerely,

*Becca Wong* (signature)

Becca Wong

*Sample Cover Letter for an Internship (accompanies resume)*

*Kate Sheehan  
29 Parker Lane  
Medford, MA 02155*

January 5, 2006

Sandra Wilson  
Internship Manager  
Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development  
2001 L St., NW  
Washington, DC 20036

Dear Ms. Wilson,

As you select interns to support your mission at the OECD, I offer my knowledge and experiences in international development for your review. I am available immediately to work with you this spring while I study Foreign Policy as part of the Washington Semester Program at American University.

Your work requires the skills, attitude, and motivation that have characterized my career at Tufts University. In the classroom, I have pursued a comprehensive study of foreign and national policy issues, relating fields of politics and economics to development. Outside the classroom, I have enjoyed leading organizations and initiatives that reflect my interest in creating cohesiveness and active citizenship among Tufts students. These include teaching a Civics course at a local middle school, organizing the first National Gandhi Day of Service project at the Greater Boston Food Bank, and serving as the Public Relations Representative for the university's largest cultural organization.

Complementing my classroom experience and intellectual pursuits, I have traveled extensively from India and Nepal to Central America and Africa. In my travels, I have observed a great divide in economic, social, and governmental development across regions. This experience fuels my interest to study and work with your organization.

I am available to start work in January, and will contact you next week to follow-up. In the meantime, you may contact me at (617) 552-1212 or [kate.sheehan@tufts.edu](mailto:kate.sheehan@tufts.edu). Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

*Kate Sheehan* (signature)

Kate Sheehan