

Cover Letter Guidelines

- The cover letter is your opportunity to inform an employer of your skills, experiences and accomplishments that match their job description, duties, and qualifications.
- The key here is to use specific examples from your coursework, assignments, projects, research, internships or jobs. Use results, numbers or percentages to tell your story.
- Start the process of creating a strong cover letter by first analyzing the job description and highlighting words or phrases that match with your knowledge or experiences.
- Most importantly, remember that grammar counts. Many employers request a cover letter in order to determine a job candidate’s level of writing. If you need assistance, take the time to visit the UIC Writing Center in Grant Hall:
<http://www.uic.edu/depts/engl/writing/>

An Emailed Letter: your cover letter may be the body of an email message. If so, then refrain from including the company name, street address, city, state and zip code. Reference the position number or job title in the subject line of your email message.

A Letter as an Attachment: If uploading your cover letter as an attachment, perhaps with your resume, then create a MS Word or PDF document using a formal business letter format.

Your Contact Information: A formal business letter will have your contact information at the top, usually aligned to the far right of the page. Your name is not included with your information since you’ll be signing the letter at the bottom of the page. Or, you could use the top of your resume with your name and contact information as the top of your cover letter.

Date: The formal business letter will have the date, one-line below your contact information or across from the person’s name you are addressing the letter to.

The Greeting for an Email or Formal Letter: First, conduct research to identify the individual you may be working for and address the letter to that person; avoid using “Dear Sir or Madam” or “To Whom It May Concern.” If you cannot identify someone at the company, use “Dear Hiring Manager” or “Dear Hiring Committee.”

For a formal business letter, be sure to include all parts of their contact information.

Full Name (starting with Mr. or Ms.)	Example:	Ms. Marie Canter
Job Title		University Recruiter
Company Name		XYZ Company
Street Address		770 South 4 th Street
City, State Zip Code		Countryside, IL 60525

A standard cover letter has 3 parts: **1. Intro, 2. Sales Pitch/Body and 3. Wrap Up**

Part 1. Introductory Paragraph

Explain why you are writing to this person, choices include: 1. applying to an advertised job opening, 2. referred by someone, 3. interested in working for the company. Reference the job title and identification number for the position. Then using 1-2 sentences demonstrate your interest and understanding of their company; what challenges they face and what opportunities exist. This will show how invested you are in their company and reflect the research you have conducted.

Introductory Example

This example demonstrates the research and understanding of the company conducted by the student:

During my research I found out that Vidaris Inc. is one of the leading consulting firms which specializes in energy efficiency, sustainability and building envelope. Inspired by the talent and passion of the company's employees, I seek an opportunity to be a part of the unique culture at Vidaris, this is my main purpose in making this application.

Part 2. Body/Sales Pitch

By matching the employer's stated needs or requirements with your experiences, education and skills, you will demonstrate how qualified you are for the position. Select 3-4 job requirements, qualifications or duties the company outlines in the job description. For each one, use a specific example to demonstrate how you meet that requirement. Reference where these examples occurred, e.g. one of your courses, UIC research project or engineering society competition.

- It is perfectly acceptable to use bullet points for the sales pitch/body of the cover letter, but refrain from simply cutting and pasting bullet points from your resume into the cover letter, you can use the same examples or accomplishments, but must word them differently.

Body/Sales Pitch Example

This example shows a connection between the job description stating 3D software as a requirement and the student having experience with 3D software:

- **3D Software:** I have had extensive experience with 3D software, including AutoCAD, Revit and Rhino. I used AutoCAD and Revit to recreate a 3D house from floor plan drawings, with accurate measurements. Rhino was used to develop a 3D city based on my concept that cities should be separated by nature or green areas.

Part 3. Wrap Up

Start this paragraph with a transition sentence from the body/sales pitch, including your enthusiasm for the position. Directly request an interview or a meeting, too much competition exists to simply end the letter with, *"I look forward to hearing from you."* State the time frame when you will follow-up with them. Lastly, thank them for their time and consideration. Use a closing word or phrase above your signature such as: Sincerely, Best Regards, or Respectfully Submitted.

Your street address
City, State and Zip Code
Email address
Phone number

Mr. or Ms. Last Name (only if you have a person's name)
Job Title (only if you have used a person's name above)
Company Name
Street Address
City, State and Zip Code

Date

Dear Mr. or Ms. Last Name **OR** Dear Hiring Manager:

Explain why you are writing to this person, choices include: referred by someone, heard a presentation by someone in the company, read something interesting about the industry or company (state your source), or applying to an advertised job opening. Demonstrate interest and understanding of their company; what challenges they face and what opportunities exist.

- Choose 3-4 job requirements, qualifications or duties the company outlines in the job description.
- For each of the requirements, use an example to demonstrate how you, the job seeker meets each requirement.
- Use bullet points in this section for easier reading, or several short paragraphs

Create a transition sentence including your enthusiasm for the position. Request an interview or a meeting. State the time frame when you will follow-up with them. Thank them for their time and consideration.

Sincerely,
(Skip 3-4 blank lines for your handwritten signature for a formal business letter)

Type your first name and last name (under your handwritten signature)

Enclosure: Resume

After you create your cover letter, ask yourself these questions.

Does my cover letter....?

- Have the appropriate format and grammar?**
- The cover letter is one page in length
- Size 11 or 12 font used
- Bullet points or several short paragraphs are used in the body/sales pitch section

- Use the formal business letter format or email format?**
- Addressed to a company representative with full name, job title, company name and mailing address
- My full contact info is at the top for a formal business letter
- I have used the person's last name, e.g. "Dear Ms. Smith" OR "Dear Hiring Committee."
- No use of: "Dear Sir or Madame" or "To Whom It May Concern"

- Introductory paragraph demonstrate my interest and preparedness?**
- Mention the position I am applying for and how I learned about the job opening or the company
- Incorporate the name of the person who referred me to this company representative, if appropriate
- Incorporate specific knowledge about the industry or the company itself, using research
- Explain why I am interested in this company, not that I am interested, but WHY I am interested

- Sell my qualifications with specific examples in the Body/Sales Pitch?**
- I have selected 3-4 requirements the company is looking for and have addressed these with specific examples
- I have made the connection between my skills, abilities and experiences and what the employer is looking for using
- Incorporated my college major and knowledge gained from internship, coursework, assignments or work experience

- Include all important parts of the concluding paragraph/wrap-up?**
- I have a transition sentence at the beginning of this paragraph
- Requested an interview or a meeting
- Stated that I will follow-up with them
- Thanked them for their time and consideration
- Above my signature I have used, "Sincerely" or "Best Regards" or "Respectfully Submitted"