

# COVER LETTER BASICS

## What is a Cover Letter?

- A sample of your written communication skills
- An introduction to a prospective employer.
- In general, it outlines your interest in the position and organization, specifies the skills you have, and gives one or two relevant experiences or examples.

## How Do I Begin?

It should be brief (no more than one page) but provide enough information to entice the recruiter to read your resume and give you an interview. Recruiters can pick out a generic or formula cover letter very quickly.

This guide will explain the general components of cover letters but you should adapt your cover letters as needed to show that you are qualified and unique candidate.

## Things to Include:

### FIRST PARAGRAPH

State your reason for writing and how you learned of the opportunity or organization. This is where you capture the reader's interest! Demonstrate your knowledge of the employer. Do some company research - look in newspapers, magazines, company literature, the Career Insider, faculty, alumni (employees), career advisors, etc.

### MIDDLE PARAGRAPH(S)

Briefly mention why you are interested in the position and the organization. Describe your qualifications. If you are a recent graduate, explain how your academic background makes you a qualified candidate in addition to practical work experience such as internships, student leadership, research, volunteer work. When applicable, point out your related achievements and qualifications.

Relate yourself to the company by explaining why you are a strong candidate. Be sure to refer to your resume but try not to repeat resume content verbatim. Instead, elaborate on one or two positive significant experiences or achievements.

Reference the position description to identify one or two key qualifications or experiences to emphasize in the letter. For example, if the position requires group presentations and you have spoken in front of large groups, provide this information.

## **FINAL PARAGRAPH:**

Indicate your interest in a personal interview. Consider suggesting dates and/or times or simply mention your flexibility as to time and place for an interview. Finally, close your letter with a statement that will encourage a follow-up response from the reviewer.

## **Additional Cover Letter Tips:**

Address the letter to a specific individual. If you are not sure to whom to address it, contact the company to find out the name of the hiring official, verify the spelling of his or her name, and the correct title. If a name is not available, address your letter to the position (i.e., Dear Personnel Director or Dear Manager).

Use matching paper for resume, cover letter, and envelope.

Customize your letter for each employer. Mass produced letters are easily detected and show a lack of sincere interest.

The tone of the letter should always be positive and confident.

Sign your letters with black ink.

Avoid negativity, boasting, exaggeration, insincerity, and inconsistency.

Take time to demonstrate enthusiasm and creativity, but avoid statements like, "I'm dying to get a PR job."

## **USE YOUR TRINITY ADVANTAGE...**

Visit the Career Services staff in Suite 215 of the University Coates Center to learn more about resumes, reference lists, and application correspondence (cover-, thank you-, acceptance-, rejection-, and withdrawal letters). We can also take you around the Career Library and guide you through the various resources and services that Career Services has to offer. To have your cover letter critiqued by our professional staff, come visit us during walk-in hours from 1:30 to 4:00, Monday through Friday.