

Cover Letter Basics

A cover letter or letter of intent should go with most resumes submitted for consideration for jobs or internships. If you can only upload one document, you can make your letter/resume into a two-page document with a page break in-between the two sections.

A cover letter is important because:

→ It introduces you and your resume.

- It explains why you are a good fit for this opportunity.
- It bridges the gap between your resume and the reader/ employer.
- It supplements and expands on projects, education and experiences directly related to the opening.
- It can make the difference between having your resume read or ignored.

Cover Letter DOs

- 👉 Use the same font, format and paper as your resume.
- 👉 Limit a cover letter to one page.
- 👉 Personalize each cover letter to the specific position.
- 👉 Check for typos, proper grammar and accuracy. Use SPELLCHECK first, but do not rely on it to catch all errors. Have an ICC Advisor review it before you send it.
- 👉 Use “standard business letter” format even if it is an email.
- 👉 When emailing, also attach a pdf version of your cover letter.
- 👉 Standard salutations are: Dear Mr. Smith, or Dear Ms. Grey.
- 👉 If no specific name, use: Dear Hiring Manager, Dear Graphics Department Hiring Team, Dear Recruiter, and To Whom It May Concern: (this last one takes a “:” not a “,”)

Cover Letter DON'Ts

- 👎 Don't try to say everything in your cover letter.
- 👎 Do not repeat or summarize your resume.
- 👎 Don't use a generic, “one size fits all” cover letter.
- 👎 Don't write long, wordy letters.
- 👎 Don't overuse adjectives, especially subjective ones. (example: You are the best X company in the world. I am the most hard-working student intern you will ever meet.)
- 👎 Do not exaggerate your skills or experience.
- 👎 Don't focus on what you want, but on what you bring to the employer.

Return Address (yours, the sender)
City, State Zip
Telephone with area code
Email address

Date

Name, Title (who is it going toformat: First Name Last Name, Title)
Company Name
Street Address
City, State Zip

Dear Ms., /Mr., /Dr., (or Hiring Manager, or To Whom It May Concern:)

In the FIRST PARAGRAPH, tell how you heard about the job and, if appropriate, name the person who told you about it. Mention the specific job title. Express your interest in the company or position. Say you are enclosing/attaching a resume that shows how you are qualified for this job. (optional)

In the SECOND PARAGRAPH (AND MAYBE IN A 3RD PARAGRAPH), analyze your background and skills in relationship to the specific job description. Show how you make a ‘good fit’ with this job/organization and how you can contribute. It is about what you can do for them, not what they can do for you. Give one or two examples of related experience. Keep the job description in mind and do NOT restate your resume. This letter shows brief highlights of your ‘fit’ with a specific job using specific skills, qualities, knowledge, interests you have that relate to the opening. (Break big paragraphs up, using one paragraph for each skill set is one way to organize them. Smaller paragraphs are more readable.)

In the LAST PARAGRAPH, tell how you will follow through with this application. For example, “I am eager to meet with you to discuss this opportunity. I am available for an interview at a mutually convenient time. And remind the reader how to reach you best.” For example, “I will be in the Bay area during the week of March 25.” or “I am able to drive to Roseville any day except Tuesdays and Thursdays.” And “I can best be reached at 530-555-1212 or james.stewart@ucdavis.edu.” I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,
(typically leave 4 spaces for your signature)

James Stewart (if emailing, use a script-like font to simulate your signature in this space)

James Stewart (Just type your name here—2 spaces below signature)

Attachments (if email) referring to your resume
Or...Enclosures (if paper mail)

Avoid overuse of adjectives and adverbs. Strive to be objective. Avoid: I am an incredibly hard worker. Better: My past supervisor noted that I am able to complete projects earlier than deadlines.

Explain in the cover letter how your experience relates to this opening using one or two key examples. Do not summarize your whole resume.

Use SPELLCHECK often, but do not rely on it to catch all errors. Then copy and paste your letter as the text of your email and attach it in pdf format.

Cover Letter
Format and
Content
Description