GUIDE TO

COVER LETTER WRITING

Becker Career Center

UNION
COLLEGE

Contact us: 518-388-6176
www.union.edu/career

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Cover Letter Writing

A cover letter is a marketing tool intended to generate interest in you and get the reader excited about reviewing your accompanying resume. The cover letter should succinctly articulate your interest and enthusiasm for both the company and specific position, and demonstrates how your unique background, skills and experiences make you an excellent fit for both the position and organization to which you are applying.

General Tips

- Make connections between what is on your resume and the position requirements; don't just repeat what's on your resume.
  - Describe specific accomplishments, experiences and skills that demonstrate how you fit the position. Provide examples to support claims; doing so strengthens your candidacy.
  - Cite examples from the most relevant areas of your background, including your internship or employment experience, leadership roles, extra-curricular activities and coursework.
- Prepare a unique letter for each position.
  - Nothing looks worse than a generic cover letter; make sure your cover letter highlights skill sets and credentials consistent with those of the job posting.
  - Customize the employer's information on each individual letter; specify why you are interested in working in this position at this company.
- Address each cover letter to the appropriate person.
  - Use "Dear Mr. or Ms. Last Name". Do not use phrases such as "To whom it may concern" or "Dear Sir or Madam". If the name is unisex (e.g., Pat Brown), use "Dear First & Last Name".
  - Call the Human Resources office or Hiring Manager of each organization to find out to whom you should be addressing your letter.
  - If you cannot identify the appropriate person, address your cover letter to "Hiring Manager" or "Human Resources Director".
- Keep a copy of every letter you submit.
  - Designate a folder on your computer to save each cover letter you send out. Use the dates on each cover letter as a reference.
  - If you do not hear from the employer within two weeks, follow up on the status of your application.
- Make it perfect.
  - Typographical errors, misspellings and poor word choice will earn your cover letter and resume a one-way ticket to the "no pile".
  - Have someone proofread your letter before sending it out.
- Enthusiasm Sells.
  - Employers want candidates who want to work for them. Show them that you've researched their organization and make a convincing case for why you want to work for them.
  - Be professional and courteous, but let your personality come through.

Formatting Tips

- Use 8½" X 11" quality bond paper – the same kind you used for your resume.
- Keep it to one page, single spaced.
- Use 10-12 point font and choose the same style you chose for your resume.
- Remember to sign your name at the bottom of each hard copy letter you submit.
- Use a Block Style Format, and align names, dates and paragraphs along the left-hand margin.
- Use 1" margins all around the page.

COVER LETTER OUTLINE

Your Street Address
City, ST Zip
Today's Date

Mr./Ms. First and Last Name of Contact
Title of Employer
Company/Organization
Street Address
City, ST Zip

Dear Mr./Ms. Last Name of Contact:

Your opening paragraph tells **why you are writing** and notes where you learned about the position or if someone referred you. When referring to the position, use the title used by the employer. If someone referred you and no specific title is known, be as specific as possible about the kind of position for which you are applying. Do some research on the organization so that you can state your genuine interest in this particular employer and why it is a good fit for you, not how it will help you.

Your middle paragraph(s) should **highlight** examples that demonstrate your relevant experience, background, and/or coursework that will show the reader why she/he should consider you as a candidate. Be sure to connect your experiences and/or education to the position description. By using examples, show the employer that you have the necessary experience they seek.

You could include another paragraph detailing additional **experience** that will demonstrate or connect your background with the position. For a concluding sentence, summarize the skills and personal traits that you would bring to the job for which you are applying. Also, remember that the reader will view your letter as an example of your writing skills.

In your closing paragraph, **reiterate your interest in the position, thank the employer for his/her consideration, provide your contact information, and indicate the follow-up action.** State what you want the recipient of the letter to do next (such as contacting you to further discuss the available position) or what you will do next (such as calling to follow-up on the status of your application). Only say you are going to follow up if you have the contact information to do so.

Sincerely,

Sign your name (note: if sending electronically no need to include signature)

Your name (typed)
Enclosure