Cover Letter & Professional Communications Guide

Cover Letter Guidelines

A cover letter is a formal business letter that accompanies a resume and serves as an introduction of you to potential employers. It will inform the employer of your skills, abilities, and experiences that relate to the job. Since your letter needs to be tailored for each employer, you should do your homework to discover what is unique and special about the organization. Remember that your letter communicates your "voice." It needs to be well-written and express your enthusiasm for the organization and the job. When emailing a cover letter, it should be included as an attachment.

Appearance

- It should be one page, written in a professional, business letter format.

- Use a professional looking font such as Calibri, Cambria, Arial, or Garamond. The generally accepted font size is 12. It should match the font and type size used on your resume.

- Please save your cover letter in a PDF format for ease of reading.

- Everything a potential employer receives from you—resume, cover letter, networking and thank you letters and emails need to project professionalism.

Content

- Your cover letter needs to be tailored to each employer. Do your homework and focus on how your skills meet their particular needs.

- Whenever possible, address your cover letter to the person who is responsible for the hiring process or for making the hiring decision. Try to avoid addressing letters "To Whom it May Concern," "Dear Sir or Madam," or "Dear Personnel Director." If you have to address the cover letter to someone, address it to "Dear Recruiting Manager."

- Your letter needs to be 100% free of spelling, grammatical, and typing errors. When at all possible have someone else proofread your cover letter.

Cover Letter Rubric

	Excellent	Acceptable	Needs Improvement
Overall Format & Content	• Uses correct business format (see page 2) • Date and address are at the top • Name is at the bottom • The letter is clear & concise • No grammar or spelling errors are found • Uses a "hook" to grab the reader's attention	• Some business formatting is used • Dates, addresses, names are included but in different parts of the cover letter • Letter is not as clear and concise as it could be • Minimal grammar and spelling errors are found	• Business formatting is not used • Contact information (for either employer or student) is not included • Letter is unclear • Multiple grammar and spelling errors are found
Section 1: Introduction	• Identifies the position for which you are seeking • Describes how you heard about the position • Explains why you are interested in the employer and job • Wording is creative and catches an employer's attention quickly • Section reflects interest in employer (i.e. through own research)	• Identifies the position you are seeking • Describes how you heard of the position • Vaguely describes why you are interested in the employer and job • Section is general and might not catch the employer's attention	• Does not identify what position you are seeking • Doesn't describe how you heard about the position • No indication of why you are interested in this employer and job • Section will not catch the employer's attention
Section 2: Body	• Uses relevant examples (1-3) from your past experiences to clearly show how these skills apply to the job • Relates the top 2-3 job's qualifications to your skills (see above) • Conclude all ideas in this paragraph as you transition to the conclusion section	• Uses non-relevant examples (1-3) from your past experiences to clearly relate how these skills apply to the job • Relates 1 of the job's qualifications to your skills (see above) • Conclude up some ideas in this paragraph as you transition to the conclusion section	• Does not use an examples from your past experiences • Have not related your skills to the position for which you are applying • Doesn't conclude ideas in this paragraph as you transition to the conclusion section
Section 3: Conclusion	• Thanks the reader for taking time to read the letter • Refers the reader to your resume or any other enclosed documents • Describes how you will follow up with the employer in a stated time period	• Thanks the reader for taking time to read the letter • Reader is not referred to your resume or any other enclosed documents • Assumes that the employer will contact you to follow up	• Does not thank the reader for taking the time to read the letter • There is no reference to a resume or any other enclosed documents • Letter does not mention any plan for follow up

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Cover Letter Example

Your Street Address
City, State, Zip

September 1, XXXX

Alicia Sagehen
Director of Marketing
Coca Cola
1000 Drink Lane
Atlanta, GA 30301

Dear Ms. Sagehen:

I am applying for the **Social Media Internship** position at Coca Cola in Atlanta. I became aware of this position through my college's online job & internship database Handshake. I am expressing interest in this position because I am extremely interested in seeing how a successful organization like yours excels in an already oversaturated social media landscape. As a worldwide leader in the carbonated beverage industry, I would love to work for a company that strives to become a leader in its industry every day.

*(**Note:** an effective writer could insert a short "hook" in the first paragraph to grab the reader's attention)*

I am currently a junior at Pitzer College majoring in Organizational Studies with a GPA of 3.5. I believe that my current courses such as **(insert several relevant courses)** would make me the perfect candidate for this position. I am diligent, trustworthy, motivated, and I never stray from a challenge **(insert other skills)**. For example **(use 1 example from your experience)**.

*(**Note:** Continue to reference 1-2 additional examples of your experience tying them back to the job description)*

I would be eager and honored to be part of the Coca Cola Social Media team. Thank you for taking the time to read my resume. Attached is my resume and an unofficial copy of my transcript for your review. I will be following up with you in a couple of weeks to determine where you are in the application process.

Sincerely,
Caroline Smith

Internship Inquiry Email

An Internship Inquiry Email is sent to any organization or person you wish to gain employment with. Some employers do not post internships online and the only way to find out about internships is by directly contacting then.

EXAMPLE:
Subject: Insert the type of internship that you are inquiring about

Dear Mr./Ms. _____,

I am writing to you because I am very interested in interning with **(company name)**. I am currently a **(class year)** at Pitzer College majoring in **(major)** with a **(GPA)**. I believe that my current coursework in **(series of relevant course work)** would make me the perfect candidate for this position. I am diligent, trustworthy, motivated, and I never stray from a challenge **(or any other skills)**. For example, **(discuss an experience that demonstrates these skills)**.

By interning with you, I hope to learn more about the field of **(insert field name)** and fully develop my professional skills. I am aware that there is no formal position available at the moment, but I hope that you please consider my resume.

Thank you,
Jane Smith
Class Year
Bachelor of Arts, Major Name
Pitzer College
Email
Phone number

Networking Email

A Networking Email is sent to someone whom you wish to connect up with to get a little bit of information about the field in which they work. The sample below is a Networking Email for an alumnus.

Subject: Hello from a Pitzer College Student!

Dear Mr./Ms. _____,

I came across your contact information through **(insert source)**. I am currently a **(class year)** at Pitzer College, and I thought that I would reach out to discuss your career path. I am majoring in **(insert major)**, and I have a strong interest in **(insert interest)**. I would love to schedule a phone chat with you to discuss your career path and learn more about your transition from Pitzer College to your current position at Company X.

I am attaching my resume for your reference. Thank you very much for your time, and I look forward to hearing back from you soon!

Sincerely,
Jane Smith
Class Year
Bachelor of Arts, Major Name
Pitzer College
Email
Phone number

Thank You Email

After an interview, within 24 hours, you should send a thank you note to each interviewer with whom you met. You may send the note as an email or as a brief typed and signed letter. You may also send a small handwritten notecard. Your note should be brief, reiterate your interest in the position, and reference specific qualifications (or topics of conversation during the interview) that you want the interviewer to remember.

EXAMPLE:
Subject: Thank You!

Dear Mr./Ms. _____,

It was such a pleasure meeting you yesterday for my interview! I really enjoyed our conversation, especially talking about **(insert most memorable part of the conversation)**. Company X is truly an exceptional place to start my career because **(insert a few notes on why Company X)**. I hope to hear back from you soon regarding my next steps. Have a great day, and once again, thank you very much for taking the time to interview yesterday!

Sincerely,

Jane Smith
Class Year
Pitzer College
Bachelor of Arts, Major Name
Email
Phone number