

How to Write an Effective Cover Letter

Masters Career Center



Purpose

- To help you understand the importance a good cover letter plays in your job search



Agenda

- Why cover letters are important
- Guidelines
- Common mistakes
- Questions



Why are Cover Letters Important?

- Without a cover letter, you run the risk that your resume and application will be discarded
- Makes a direct connection between your resume and the job posting and *leaves a positive impression*





Ultimate goal: To get an interview!!



Student Address

Stacy Lolkus
222 Harrison Dr
Apartment 5
West Lafayette, IN 47906
765-450-7583
slo@purdue.edu

Date

October 16, 2006

Employer Address

Jenny Lock
Uline — HR Recruiting Center
2105 S. Lakeside Drive
Waukegan, IL 60085

Salutation

Dear Ms. Lockridge:

First Paragraph

After speaking with Emily Richards about her past summer in the internship program, I am very interested in your Human Resources Summer Internship position. I worked with employee benefits this past summer and became very interested in the human resources aspect. I have obtained many leadership opportunities while working as a Business Writing Consultant Assistant Coordinator at Purdue's Writing Lab that would be valuable in a career at Uline.

Middle Paragraph

As Business Writing Consultant Assistant Coordinator at Purdue's Writing Lab, my primary role is to help train new tutors for the Writing Lab. I work directly with the Business Writing Coordinator teaching classes and participating in mock tutorials to allow students to obtain hands-on experience tutoring business documents. I also organize educational workshops to refresh the skills of current Business Writing Consultants. My position as a Boiler Gold Rush Team Leader also challenged me to use my enthusiastic personality to motivate incoming freshmen to be involved in campus activities. As a Human Resources Intern at Uline, I could use all of these leadership skills while learning more about recruiting and hiring practices.

Conclusion

Thank you for considering me for this position. I would love to discuss these and other qualifications with you. If you have any questions, please call me at 765-450-7583 or e-mail me at slo@purdue.edu.

Closing

Sincerely,
Stacy Lolkus
Stacy Lolkus

Enclosure: Résumé

Guidelines—general



- Address your target by name. Whenever possible, send your resume directly to the hiring manager.
- Mention the specific job to which you are applying and emphasize how your skills fit the job.
- Be succinct and on-message. No rambling.
- End with a call to action, describing how and when you can be contacted for any additional questions.

Guidelines—general



- The cover letter should always be left-justified and use proper titles. This is a formal letter, not a casual discussion.
 - Use: Dear Recruiter, Dear Hiring Manager, Dear Ms. XXX, Dear Mr. XXX,
 - Do not use: “Hi Jane,” “Hey Bill,” “Dear Mrs. or Dear Miss XXX”
 - Never use first and last name “Dear Mr. John Smith”
- Three paragraphs maximum (four paragraphs for extensive experience)
- A good reference: “*Knock 'em Dead Cover Letters*” by Martin Yate

Guidelines—first paragraph

- Explain why you are writing to this person—reference the specific job and where you learned about it
- Mention any networking you have done, such as attending corporate presentations, speaking with classmates, alumni or other representatives of the company
- Focus on what value you bring to the company, not what you want



Guidelines—Second Paragraph

- Customize this section for each job
- Use the skills listed in the job posting to explain why you are qualified for this job.
- Focus on the skills being sought rather than unrelated skills. If you are a career changer—focus on relevant transferrable skills.



Guidelines—Final Paragraph

- End positively and graciously, thanking the reader for their time and consideration
- Passion Statement: explicitly state your passion for what you are pursuing and your desire to work for that company. For example, “This opportunity is directly aligned with my passion for _____. [Company’s] strategy in this space places it at the forefront of change.”



Mistakes



- Not proofreading—spelling and grammar errors are fatal
- Forgetting to change the name of the company in the cover letter
- Not linking your skills directly to the job—Always use the same language that is used in the job description
- Not focusing on what you can do for the company
- Not getting to the point quickly
- Not submitting a cover letter at all!