

# **Cover Letter Guide**



## **Academic & Career Advising**

For an appointment, call or email us at:  
(630) 466-2368  
careerdevelopment@waubonsee.edu

**Additional resources available 24/7 at:**  
[www.waubonsee.edu/careerdevelopment](http://www.waubonsee.edu/careerdevelopment)

For résumé writing assistance, see the 5 Steps to Résumé Success at  
[www.waubonsee.edu/careerdevelopment](http://www.waubonsee.edu/careerdevelopment)

# Cover Letter Basics

**A customized cover letter should accompany every résumé submission.** A well-written cover letter will help you effectively develop a connection with the employer and position. Use your cover letter to paint a picture of how you will work and what you will contribute to the company or organization you are hoping to join.

## GETTING STARTED:

- Before you begin writing, read the job description thoroughly and determine how you meet the qualifications
- Research the organization and include references to their mission, needs, or vision throughout your document. Understand what they do and how your education and experiences align with the mission, needs, and goals.
- Identify key requirements of the organization and connect them to your experience.

## COVER LETTER GENERAL STRUCTURE AND FORMAT:

### Section 1: Contact Info (Yours & Company's)

- Your name and contact info formatted the same as on your résumé (copy/paste).
- The date
- Name of hiring manager and company name/address

### Section 2: Introduction

Length: approximately 2-3 sentences

- Open your cover letter with a strong, compelling sentence that draws your reader in immediately
- Brand yourself: who are you, as it relates to this position?
- What position are you applying for and why are you a good fit?

### Section 3: Qualifications

Length: approximately 3-5 relevant bullet points or one paragraph

- Begin with a phrase introducing the bullet points or paragraph (i.e. *"Skills and experience I will use to help Company achieve [its goals] include:"*)
- Write new SOAR bullets; do not copy and paste whole bullets from your résumé
- Make connections for the employer: show how your experiences directly relate to the organization and position

### Section 4: Closing

Length: approximately 2-3 sentences

- Reiterate your interest and how to contact you (include your phone/email)
- Include a call-to-action statement
- Thank them

# Cover Letter Myths & Tips

**Myth: A cover letter is not as important as a résumé.**

**TIP:** A cover letter is *just as important as a résumé*. Sometimes employers receive hundreds (or thousands) of applications received for one position and use the cover letter as a screening document. *If you don't tailor it to each specific job or company, you run the risk of being taken out of the candidate pool early in the process.* Some hiring managers prefer to read the cover letter as an example of your writing skills. Use the cover letter to tell your story and make a connection to the position and organization.

**Myth: A cover letter should give the reader an overview of your past.**

**TIP:** Rather than reviewing all your experience, focus on the most relevant experience. Your cover letter should clearly convey what you offer to the organization and how you can meet the needs listed in the job description. If you are writing to apply for an internship and have little (or no) direct experience, focus on your transferable skills and connect your academic background to the position. Be sure to convey a sincere interest in the organization and the skills or experiences you do have.

**Myth: Your cover letter is simply a repeat of your résumé.**

**TIP:** Cover letters are your opportunity to “personalize” your interest, experience, and skills. Avoid repeating accomplishments or experiences verbatim and instead build on what you introduced in the résumé to showcase how it is directly transferable to the new job. Make it about the organization and select items that are relevant or unique to them.

**Myth: A cover letter should begin with the salutation, “To Whom It May Concern”.**

**TIP:** Use LinkedIn, web searches, and your professional network to learn the name of the person who will be receiving the letter. If this is impossible, try “Dear Hiring Manager” or add the title of the reader.

**Myth: Your cover letter should be short—the shorter, the better.**

**TIP:** An effective cover letter is most often 3-5 paragraphs that are tailored to the company by relating to its mission and the specific job description at hand. It is important to weave your story into the company's to demonstrate your relevancy and your understanding of the company.

**Myth: Your cover letter is where you identify your feelings, passions, and share your personal story.**

**TIP:** Your résumé is about you; your cover letter is about the employer. This means that your cover letter should NOT be full of statements about why the position is good for *you*. Instead, your cover letter should focus on how your skills and abilities will be an asset to the job and organization (how you are good for *them*).

# Employment Cover Letter Sample Template

Your Name  
Address City, State Zip • Phone • Email

Date

Your header (name and contact info) should be formatted exactly the same as on your résumé.

Hiring Manager Name, Title  
Organization Name  
Company Address  
City, State, Zip

Dear Dr./Ms./Mr. Last Name: (If you do not have the contact name, use “Dear Hiring Manager”)

Introduce yourself in a fresh way that is relevant to the employer/position. (Have you worked on a branding statement? If so, draw from that. If not, Academic & Career Advising can help you craft one!) Answer these questions: what position are you applying for and why are you a good fit? Include position title, how you found the position and mention a referral if you have one.

Statement introducing SOAR bullets about what you offer:

- Develop a relationship between you and the employer by displaying your knowledge of the organization or industry.
- Describe your accomplishments and qualifications, relating them to the needs from the ad and/or job description.
- Make sure you are answering the question: “Why should I hire you?”
- Use the comparisons you drafted in the Cover Letter Guide to match the needs in the description with your accomplishments and skills.
- Concisely demonstrate relevant qualifications and match the organization’s hiring needs

Reiterate your interest in the position, company, or organization. Include your phone and email address so that they can reach you easily. Mention your interest in the next steps (for example, “I would appreciate an interview to discuss this opportunity further”). End with a professional but memorable closing statement that includes a thank you.

Sincerely,

Your First and Last Name

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*Need some inspiration? Check out cover letter samples & templates for various jobs on:*

<https://www.indeed.com/career-advice/cover-letter-samples>

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**STOP! Before writing a cover letter, understand why it is important.** The cover letter is a chance to tell a perspective employer in writing why you are the right fit for their position, and their office. Explain why the position interests you, what you bring to the table, and get the reader excited to interview you and learn more.

## Payton Smith

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March 15, 2010

Jeremy Irons  
Recruiter  
XYZ Employer  
187 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Suite 143  
Seattle, WA 98124

RE: XYZ Internship (Job ID 102938)

Dear Mr. Irons:

I have been admiring xyz Firm's television and print ad campaigns since I began studying marketing and was excited to find your firm's xyz internship position through InternMatch!

As a marketing major at ABC College, I have found that I am adept at marketing and truly enjoy advertising projects. Through my marketing courses and my experience as a Public Relations Chair of student club. I have honed x, y, and z skills which I can contribute as a xyz intern. Some of the qualifications I have are:

- Knowledge of Marketing:**
  - Marketing Major with 3.8 GPA in Marketing courses
- Solid Communication Skills:**
  - Contacted clients to promote services as a Marketing & Sales Intern at *ListenUP*.
  - Composed and edited articles for ABC College Newspaper.
- Creativity:**
  - Utilized Photoshop CS4 and PowerPoint 2008 to design mock products and a presentation for *COMM 130: Visual Communication* course.

I align closely with your firm's focus on creative, results driven marketing campaigns. As an intern, I will bring my skills, education and experience to achieve the goals and learning opportunities offered in this position. I look forward to our conversation about my application and interest.

Sincerely,

*John Doe*

**Try to find the person who is in charge of the hiring and address your resume and cover letter to them.**  
Statistics show you have a better chance of being hired if you know who's doing the hiring!

**Including your contact information on all your documents makes you look professional and ensures you are easy to find.** Include your name, phone number, address and a professional email.

**Hook'em!** Start your cover letter with a statement that will catch the reader's eye. Try something interesting or entertaining that relates you to the company.

**Finish strong and with confidence!** Let the company know why you want to work for them and that you really believe you can fit in.

**"What I can do for you!"** Employers want to know what you can bring to the table. Bullets are great for being specific and to the point, but paragraphs work too.

**Pro tip:** Although it is not required, if you have access to a scanner, adding a digital signature will personalize your cover letter!

**When emailing or uploading your cover letter use MS Word.** Not all organizations can open PDF files or will be kind enough to ask you to resend it. And remember, to name the document file using your name: PaytonSmithCoverLetter.