

Cover Letter Guide

What is a cover letter?

- ❖ The purpose of a cover letter is to introduce yourself to an employer, encourage an employer to review your resume, and consider you for an interview. It is your opportunity to make a great first impression! Rather than restating your resume, your cover letter should emphasize unique qualifications and personal characteristics that are relevant to that particular organization or job opportunity.
- ❖ A good cover letter should explicitly address what you can do for the organization, not what it can do for you. The most effective way to do this is to research everything possible about the organization. Additionally, address the requirements of the position in your cover letter by using similar language to the posted job description.

What is the format?

Cover letters should typically be limited to **one page with 3-4 paragraphs** (although there are exceptions). Additionally, your cover letter should follow the standard business letter format with 1-inch margins. Below are guidelines on what to include:

ADDRESS, DATE, AND SALUTATION:

- Your address and date at the top of the page.
- Name, professional title, and address of the person/organization to whom you are writing.
- Formal salutation: “Dear Mr. / Ms. _____”. If at all possible, **address your letter to a specific person** instead of the generic “To Whom It May Concern:” If this information is not provided in the job posting, simply call the organization and request the name of the person in charge of hiring or consult the website.

OPENING PARAGRAPH:

- **Begin by stating the purpose of the letter, not introducing yourself.**
- Tell the employer how you heard about the position/organization (Career Fair, Online posting, Alumni).
- If you have previously met the employer, this is the place to remind him/her (ie: “After speaking with you at the Portland Community College Job Fair...”).

SECOND PARAGRAPH:

- **Answer the question: “Why do you want to work for this company/organization/employer?”**
- Indicate why you are interested in the organization, its products or services, and the position.

→ Tip: Research who the organization is serving, how it performs compared to competitors, and what current trends affect that industry. This will help you answer the question.

THIRD PARAGRAPH:

- **Answer the question: “Why are you qualified for the position?” (What unique attributes can you offer?)**
- Describe how you will relate your previous skills and experiences to the requirements of the position and benefit the employer.

- Provide specific examples to support your qualifications. Indicate how your work and field/internship experiences, research projects, volunteer activities, extracurricular background, and career aspirations relate to the position and the organization's interests and goals.
- Use language from the job description or desired qualifications to indicate that you have what they're looking for. Make the addressee want to read your resume by being personable and enthusiastic.

FINAL PARAGRAPH:

- **Arrange to follow up with the employer on the status of your application/inquiry.**
- Invite him/her to contact you should additional information be needed and state your primary mode of communication (ie: phone number and/or email) in the letter.
- Indicate your desire for a personal interview and your flexibility as to the time and place.
- Thank the employer for his/her time and consideration.
- Use a formal closing: "Sincerely" with your name signed and typed.

You have a draft. Now what?

- ❖ **It is very important to present your cover letter free of errors!** Come see any of the Academic Success Center's writing tutors to check for grammar, mechanics, and misspelled words. If you'd like to schedule an appointment with the WPC Career Services staff, contact us. We're more than happy to provide support!
- ❖ After you ensure your cover letter is free of errors, save your cover letter as a PDF file under an appropriate and professional file name. Always submit your cover letter as a PDF unless otherwise specified. PDF files typically look more professional and will keep your format from being warped through other people's computers.
- ❖ If you're submitting a resume and a cover letter together, make sure that your headers & font match. This will create a unified body of work and will appear very clean and professional.
- ❖ If you're printing your cover letter, make sure it's on nice paper. Aim for thicker quality paper – maybe not cardstock, but something that will feel good in the employer's hands. Also, avoid colored paper, but anything off-white or light beige will help to make your cover letter pop out from the company's stack of applications.
- ❖ Remember that companies will sometimes look at your social media. Tidy up your online presence and delete anything that might persuade companies to pass over you as a candidate. This is also typically overlooked, but make sure that your phone's voicemail is appropriate.
- ❖ Finally, start applying to jobs! See our "Job search & Interview Etiquette Guide" for more tips and suggestions as you embark to find your calling. Good luck!

** This resume guide has been crafted and adapted from several established career services departments. Primary sources include Reed College and the University of North Carolina at Asheville.*

Sample Cover Letters

Corey Coverletter
2219 SE 68th Avenue
Portland, Oregon 97215

May 27, 2016

Mr. Eric Employer, Sports Editor
The Oregonian
123 Newspaper Lane
Portland, OR 97215

Dear Mr. Employer:

I am writing to express my interest in the Copy Editor Position with the *Oregonian* that is posted on Warner Pacific College's Career Center website. As a native of Portland and avid reader of the *Oregonian*, I have been seeking an opportunity to work for your paper for quite some time and am excited about the possibility of serving in this position. The *Oregonian's* focus on local education and community building is of particular interest to me as an individual that regularly volunteers with a variety of local nonprofit organizations.

My significant experience working with publications makes me an ideal fit for the position of Copy Editor. My interest in editing began in high school when I began my own publication, which I continue to publish. While in college, I worked as a sports writer for the school paper, *The Knight Times*, and served as sports editor during my final semester. I found the job fulfilling and was able to fine tune my skills in reporting and editing.

In addition to my experience with Warner Pacific's *Knight Times*, I also completed a copy editing internship at *Living Magazine*. In this position, my careful approach and dedication to the publication's mission of informing the community about choices for healthy living was highly valued. Additionally, I have a strong work ethic. I graduated with distinction from Warner Pacific College with a Bachelor of Arts in Mass Communication while working 20 hours per week and serving in various campus leadership roles.

I am confident that my professional experience and educational background would serve me well as Copy Editor for the *Oregonian*. It would be my pleasure to work for a well-respected publication and to work with the *Oregonian's* award-winning staff. I look forward to the opportunity to interview with you to allow us to further discuss my qualifications for the position. If you have any questions or would like me to provide any additional information, please feel free to contact me at (555) 555-5555 or ccoverletter@gmail.com. Thank you for your time in considering my resume. I look forward to speaking with you soon.

Sincerely,

Corey Coverletter

Suzy Student

sstudent@warnerpacific.edu · 2219 SE 68th Avenue · Portland, Oregon · 97215
(555) 555-5555 · LinkedIn: linkedin.com/in/suzystudent

August 1, 2016

Ms. Jane Doe, Marketing Coordinator
The Best Employer, Inc.
360 Employment Lane
Portland, Oregon 97215

Dear Ms. Doe:

Dr. Anne Jones of Warner Pacific College's Management Department suggested that I contact you regarding the possibility of a summer internship with the The Best Employer, Inc's marketing department. I know that several Warner Pacific College students have completed successful internships with your company in the past and I look forward to pursuing such an opportunity. In researching the company, I am impressed by the department's cutting edge marketing strategies and the awards won in recent years for advances in marketing technology.

In May 2017, I will graduate with a Bachelor of Science in Management with a concentration in Marketing. I believe my education and experience would be a perfect match for the current initiatives Dr. Jones described to me. In particular, your desire to concentrate on an international market is one of my interests as I studied abroad for a semester in Madrid, Spain. While in Spain I was not only engrossed in the culture, but I also focused my coursework on international marketing techniques. Additionally, I was able to fine tune my language skills and feel comfortable with speaking and writing the Spanish language.

This Fall, I served as an Intern for Networking, Inc. I developed a customer satisfaction survey and used the results to come up with recommendations for improving customer service. I will formally present this project at the next board meeting. My coursework in the Management department at Warner Pacific College has also involved creating several marketing plans that targeted regional, national, and international markets. These can be viewed at www.suzysample.com.

I am excited to learn more about how I could contribute to The Best Employer's success. I will follow up with you next week in regards to the status of my application. In the meantime, you may reach me by phone (555) 555-5555 or by email at sstudent@aol.com. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Suzy Student