

Cover letters are marketing tools used to create interest in you as a candidate for jobs and/or internships and are an important part of the application process. Each cover letter you write must be unique. The goal is to motivate the recipient to review your resume and ultimately invite you for an interview. A good letter will clearly demonstrate how you fit with the particular organization and position to which you are applying.

When writing a cover letter, keep the following in mind:

1. Write it for the READER, and
2. Connect the Dots (Relate to that specific position)

The most common mistakes individuals make when writing cover letters is that they attempt to include every skill or quality -- hoping that something, *anything* captures the reader's attention -- and that they write it for themselves rather than tailoring the message to the reader. Additionally, individuals fail to connect their experiences and skill sets to what the employer has requested from applicants, as outlined in the job description.

While it may be tempting to create a generic letter that you send to every employer, **don't** -- each employer is unique and your cover letter should convey your understanding of their organization and the position for which you are applying. Remember -- the employer can find more than one person with the skills they need for the job. What they have trouble finding, though, is someone who is truly interested in the company and the open position. An easy way to demonstrate that kind of information is to tailor your cover letter to the audience who will be reading your letter!

## Main Types of Cover Letters

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**Letter of Application:** Used when submitting your resume for a specific position opening.

**Letter of Inquiry:** Used to ask about vacancies, get your resume read, and network. It is similar to an application letter, but begins with a statement such as "I am writing to inquire about employment" rather than "I am applying for a position . . ."

## General Formatting Guidelines

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- Address the letter to an individual, not "to whom it may concern." Make a phone call if necessary to get the appropriate person's name and title.
  - Write in a professional, confident, and polite tone, but let your personality and enthusiasm for the employer and position come through. Avoid negative phrases such as, "Although I never . . ." and "While I don't . . ."
  - Proofread carefully and check for grammar, spelling and typos. Do not rely on spell check alone!
  - Use the same paper you used for your resume. If you are emailing your application, you may attach the cover letter as a Word document, or (*very carefully!*) type it directly into the body of your email.
  - Confine your letter to one page, single space.
  - If mailing, remember to *sign the original*.
  - Use 11-12 point simple font – the same style you chose for your resume.
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## Steps to Writing a Strong Cover Letter:

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**Step 1:** Read and analyze the job description and **highlight important words and phrases**. Employers will tell you exactly what they are seeking. These are your clues – use them wisely!

Most job descriptions provide the reader and/or applicant at least three qualities or experiences sought in an attractive candidate.

\*Practice\*

Read the generic description of job requirements listed below and identify 3-4 things the employer is seeking:

**Sample job description:** *Exceptional communication skills, ability to motivate self and others, history of strong academic achievement, participation in school or extracurricular activities and experience in leadership roles, organizational skills, problem-solving skills, team oriented, technical skills (related to the field.)*

**Step 2:** Select two to four qualities to address in your letter

**Consider skills you have relevant to the employer's needs.** These may be from a variety of experiences; it is up to you to “connect the dots” so the employer sees how and why you meet their needs.

Identify the qualities or experiences you possess that you intend to focus on in your letter

**Step 3:** Identify experiences and/or achievements where you've demonstrated the qualities outlined in the job description. Be specific and provide examples to support claims. Avoid the temptation to copy wording from sample cover letters and don't repeat verbatim what is on your resume! Be sure to **highlight what you have to offer**, rather than what you have to gain! Also avoid beginning each sentence with “I” – it's a sign of weak writing skills!

Write down the qualities you've selected; next to each, write down where you've demonstrated that quality. For example:

### **Communication skills**

- Team member at work – XYZ project

### **Academic Achievement**

- Dean's List 2 semesters

### **Organization and Leadership**

- Worked 20 hours, full course load, active in club

**Learn about the organization.** What are its goals and mission? Pay attention to the language used to describe the organization and use similar language when talking about yourself.

**Write a draft that clearly spells out how and why you should be considered for the position.**

## **Additional Resources**

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- Discuss your draft with a counselor during Walk In Hours (view Walk In Hours on the Career Services website: [www.eastfalls.jefferson.edu/careerservices/index.html](http://www.eastfalls.jefferson.edu/careerservices/index.html)). It is best if you bring the position description along with your printed draft.

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# Cover Letter Format

Your Local Street Address  
City, State and Zip Code  
Date

Mr./Ms. First and Last Name  
Title  
Name of Firm or Organization  
Street Address  
City, State and Zip Code

Dear Mr./Ms. Last Name:

**First Paragraph:** The opening paragraph of your cover letter should be a brief introduction of who you are and the opportunity to which you are applying (or, in the case of a "cold cover letter", the opportunity you're seeking). If a person who has some relevance to the reader referred you, mention that person here (no name-dropping for the sake of name-dropping, please). In this paragraph, also demonstrate knowledge of the company or industry, presented in a compelling manner. Stay away from communicating how your career would benefit from being employed by the company – the employer assumes you'll benefit by their employment. Instead, mention, in a general manner, how your skills will benefit the company.

*Sample:*

As a recent graduate of Jefferson with a major in XYZ and two years of internship experience in the XYZ industry (or company name), I was excited to see your recent advertisement online for XYZ (position title). As a result of my research, I understand that XYZ Corp. does work in \_\_\_\_\_ area(s), which directly aligns with my interests in \_\_\_\_\_. I possess the skills you've outlined in the description and have a strong interest in applying my skills to benefit the company.

## **2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Paragraphs:**

In these body paragraphs, take the time to connect the dots between the job description and your experience. Analyze the description and review the outline you've created of how you've demonstrated the sought-after skill. Use specific examples and show accomplishments.

*Sample:*

During my recent internship with XYZ (company name) I worked closely with the Account Services team tasked with tracking customer satisfaction. I developed strong communication skills through my direct interaction with customers, conducting face-to-face and phone surveys. Additionally, I presented weekly updates to my manager and the team in both writing and during staff meetings. I received positive feedback from both customers and my manager and was recognized by my employer for my strong contributions to the team. While working 20 hours per week I carried a full-time course load at Jefferson and maintained a strong academic record, earning Deans List for two semesters. I developed strong organizational skills while in school allowing me to excel in my academics, my internship and participate in student organizations including A and B (organization names).

**Final Paragraph:** Close the letter with a summary of what you've discussed and ask for an interview. Provide contact information (in case your resume and letter are separated) and mention how you plan to follow up.

*Sample:*

It is with great interest that I submit my resume for the position of XYZ and I would welcome the opportunity to discuss my experiences in more detail during an interview. I can be reached at 215-555-1234 (cell phone) or at [name@youremail.com](mailto:name@youremail.com). I look forward to hearing from you in the coming weeks.

Sincerely,

(Written signature)

Your name typed here

**LISA WATSON**

120 Lark Street  
Philadelphia, PA 19144

Manager of Human Resources  
Citadel Broadcasting Company  
PO Box 414  
Philadelphia PA 19104

To Whom it May Concern:

My name is Lisa Watson and I am interested in the Sales/Marketing Consultant position. I have a BA in business and I have been very involved in my campus's Relay for Life. I feel your position is a perfect fit to help me meet my career goals.

As you can see on my resume, I have the skills necessary for this position, including science coursework and interpersonal skills. I also am a quick learner and am willing to go the extra mile to get things done.

I believe I am a good fit for your company. If you wish to schedule an interview, please call me at (215) 777-5555.

Sincerely,

Lisa

**WEAK COVER LETTER**

This letter is clearly not written specifically for this position, is not formatted properly, and is generally BORING!

**STRONG COVER LETTER**

This properly formatted and targeted letter lists examples that are relevant to the position and demonstrates interest in this specific position/organization.

123 University Ave.  
Philadelphia, PA 19144

September 10, 2015

Ms. Jennifer Smith  
Title, XYZ Corporation  
12 Company Address  
Philadelphia, PA 19104

Dear Ms. Smith: *(Do your absolute best to find the name of the hiring manager)*

Bob Jones recommended that I contact you regarding the Merchandising Intern position at XYZ Corp. *(Skip this sentence if you do not have a connection to the organization.)* I am a Fashion Merchandising and Management student at Jefferson with experience at ABC Organization and leadership experience as the Secretary of the Fashion Industry Association. I was excited to see your recent advertisement online for the Merchandising Intern position. As a result of my research, I understand that XYZ Corp. does work in \_\_\_\_\_ area(s), which directly aligns with my interests. My strong organizational and communication skills, coupled with my understanding of fashion trends, make me an exceptional candidate for this position.

While working at ABC Organization I was responsible for assisting the owner with operations, sales and merchandising. I maintained organized inventory control and order placement with suppliers resulting in storefront efficiency. This experience allowed me to develop strong communication skills while directly interacting with customers. I received positive feedback from both customers and my manager and was recognized by my employer for my positive contributions to the team. Additionally, in my role as Secretary of the Fashion Industry Association, I was responsible for taking notes during meetings and providing weekly updates to members.

In addition to working 20 hours per week I carried a full-time course load at Jefferson and maintained a strong academic record, earning Dean's List for two semesters. During this time I worked on \_\_\_\_\_ project in my \_\_\_\_\_ class where I \_\_\_\_\_. *(This is where you can show knowledge of the company and connect it back to your experience).*

It is with great interest that I submit my resume for the position of Merchandising Intern and I would welcome the opportunity to discuss my experiences in more detail during an interview. I can be reached at 215-999-9999 or at first.last@youremail.com. Thank you for your consideration and I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

*(signature here)*

Lisa Watson

## Thank-you Letters

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The thank-you letter is an important part of the job search process that is frequently skipped. Omitting this step can be detrimental to your job search. Employers have on more than one occasion, eliminated candidates who neglected to thank the interviewer(s) for their time with a written thank-you. With that in mind, it is important to send a thank-you within 48 hours of each of your interviews! Opinions on whether your letter should be typed, hand-written, sent via snail-mail or email vary greatly, but all recruiters and career professionals agree on one thing: **THE THANK-YOU MUST BE SENT!**

Your brief letter should thank the interviewer for his or her time, briefly recap part of your conversation, and restate interest in the position for which you were interviewed.

### Sample Thank-you Letter

1256 Murray Avenue  
Philadelphia, PA 19144  
November 2, 2015

Dr. Julia Edmonds, Director  
Technical Design Group  
Atlantic Engineering Systems, Inc.  
1220 Warwick Avenue  
Newport News, VA 23607

Dear Dr. Edmonds:

Thank you for taking the time to interview me for the Associate Engineer position on November 1<sup>st</sup>. I enjoyed meeting you and learning more about your research and design work.

My enthusiasm for the position and my interest in working for Atlantic Engineering Systems were strengthened as a result of our conversation. I was pleased to learn how well my senior design project relates to current initiatives of AES. I am confident that I would make meaningful contributions to the position and the company.

I would like to reiterate my strong interest in the position and in working with you and your staff. Please contact me at 804-685-5555 if I can provide any additional information.

Again, thank you for the interview and continued consideration.

Sincerely,

*(signature here)*

Frederick Bryan