Cover Letter Guide

Ave Maria University
Career Services

Student Union, Office 2031
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(239) 304-7228

Cover Letter Guide

Cover letters should tell a good story about the qualifications and skills that make you the *best* candidate for a particular position. The cover letter is a measure of your writing skills. Be precise, courteous and tailor your message for each employer.

Step One: Format

- Include complete contact information. Copying and pasting the headline from your resume is an effective way of doing this.
- Include the date.
- Address a specific person (do NOT write "To Whom It May Concern")
    - Finding the name of the hiring manager demonstrates initiative
    - Search the company website or other online resources (such as LinkedIn) for address, job title, and names
    - Call the human resources desk and ask for the name of the hiring manager for the role or for the entry-level or intern recruiter
    - If all else fails, address a specific job title such as Director of Human Resources
- Readable font (such as Times New Roman) in size 11 or 12 – should match your resume font
- Include a formal greeting and closing
- Never exceed one page (though length is less important when emailing your cover letter)
- The subject line of your email should include your name and the job title
- Cover letters are left justified, no indentions, with one line of white space between paragraphs

Step Two: Content

First Paragraph

- States the reason for writing (where you learned of the job opening, mention specific job title)
- States the reason for interest in the particular employer and job
    - research the company "about us" page for mission statements and general knowledge
    - use sites such as LinkedIn, Glassdoor, Vault, or Wetfeet to gain additional insight on this company, this job title, this industry and incorporate your knowledge and keywords in to the cover letter
- Mentions your contact/referral if you have one

Second Paragraph

- States your qualifications (use keywords from the job description when possible)
- Describes two or three specific experiences or achievements that demonstrate those qualifications (can be organized in bullet form – see examples)
- Written in the active voice, without run-on sentences
- Includes varied sentence structure
- Relates your skills and experiences directly to the position description

Third Paragraph

- States your follow up action (desire for interview, for example)
- Reiterates your enthusiasm and interest in the position
- Thanks the reader and indicates that you look forward to speaking with him/her
- May reference your attached resume

Step Three: Proofread

- Your cover letter should not be a repetition of the wording on your resume
- Make sure to vary your sentence structure – do not begin all sentences with "I"
- Your language should be grammatically correct, formal and professional
- Focus on what you bring to the employer not what the employer can do for you
- Use plain, heavier weight paper (the same as your resume paper) if printing your document
- If emailing a contact, the cover letter content IS the email

Step Four: Follow Up

- If your final paragraph indicated a specific time/date that you would follow up, follow through!
- A phone call is usually acceptable to ensure your application materials arrived. You may also inquire as to the timeline of the hiring process and/or if additional materials would be of any assistance to the employer in reaching a positive decision regarding your application.

Additional Tips

Use your cover letter to make a particular experience from your resume stand out. If you have directly related experience that bears more explanation than the ½ inch you've allowed on your resume, make sure you highlight it here, where you have a little more license to explain.

Similarly, cover letters are a venue for addressing potential employer concerns. If your background doesn't directly relate to the job title, you should have a compelling reason and display of interest in the position that you can communicate in the cover letter. If you will be relocating for this opportunity, an explanation of your desire to do so, is also advised. Be cautious here, however, to avoid calling unnecessary attention to something that might otherwise be overlooked.

Sample Phrases

Similar to a resume, focus on writing about accomplishments in your cover letters. Have a base of sentences that can be used in a variety of situations. Construct phrases similar to these:

- XYZ's use of advanced digital recording technology is of particular interest to me.
- As a long-time resident of Chicago, I plan to return to the area to develop my career in advertising.
- Your company's management trainee program is particularly unique in its rotational plan and accompanying classroom instruction.
- With my educational background, bilingual skills, and business intern experience, I am confident I can make a contribution to your global sales desk.
- I would like the opportunity to further discuss my qualifications with you in an interview scheduled at your convenience.
- Please accept the attached resume in application for an Assistant Editor position with News Time.
- I look forward to talking with you and will call your office during the week of September 7th to see if we might arrange a convenient time to meet.

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AVE STUDENT

Current Address: 5050 Ave Maria Blvd • Ave Maria, FL • 34142
Permanent Address: 987 Ocean Drive • Tampa, FL • 43210 • 202-304-5986 • ave.student@avemaria.edu

February 5, 2013

Ms. Expert Recruiter
University Relations Specialist
The Vanguard Group
P.O. Box 2900
Valley Forge, PA 19482

Dear Ms. Recruiter:

Please consider my attached resume for Vanguard's Accelerated Development Program. Currently, I am a senior majoring in business at Ave Maria University. The qualities I have to offer Vanguard in this program include:

- **An achiever with outstanding interpersonal skills:** While working as an intern at XYZ Company, I was selected for the marketing strategy team that partnered to increase revenue by 41% and customer base by 20%. In my hometown, I volunteered for a local non-profit organization where I worked with clients from different cultures. Based on my contributions and commitment to the organization, I earned recognition as "Volunteer of the Month."
- **Demonstrated leader and team player:** I co-founded a student "household" aimed at increasing the spiritual development of young men at Ave Maria University. Over the past three years, we have been able to generate a 25% increase in membership and focus on purpose-driven devotions. I also served as a Resident Assistant in one of the University's residence halls while achieving a 3.59 GPA in my classes.
- **Excellent analytical and quantitative abilities:** In a team-based business simulation, I continuously analyzed the market and our competition for a financial services firm throughout the semester. The professor acknowledged our final project as being "an outstanding example for future classes."

Vanguard is a leader in providing exceptional client service and a variety of financial products. Specifically, Vanguard's mission of doing what's right in every situation matches my own personal values and interests, as demonstrated through my community service and student life efforts.

I am committed to adding value and contributing to Vanguard's excellent reputation. Please consider placing me on your upcoming phone interview schedule. Thank you in advance for your consideration. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at (202) 304-5986.

Sincerely,

Ave Student

Ave Student

12345 Permanent Address ● Union, NJ 12345 ● (111) 222-3333 ● ave.student@my.avemaria.edu

April 3, 2013

Mr. John Smith
Cato Institute
1000 Massachusetts Ave NW
Washington, DC 20001

Dear Mr. Smith:

As a graduating senior majoring in politics at Ave Maria University, I am actively seeking a position in Washington, D.C. which would allow me to utilize my abilities as a critical thinker and communicator. The position description for a Media Relations Coordinator on your website caught my attention, and I am confident that my background and skills are a good fit for the position.

My internship experience on Capitol Hill with Representative Leonard Lance (R–NJ) included responsibility for the daily operations of a busy congressional office. I developed my written and oral communication skills by responding to a large volume of constituent concerns via phone, email and in person. This role also included drafting press releases and maintaining regular communication with members of the media, experience I would apply in the Media Relations Coordinator role.

A group project for the class American Government helped me hone my organizational and leadership skills. As the project lead, I set deadlines for completion of each section of the research assignment and followed up with team members. I combined the individual sections into a single paper, editing as needed. The project was completed several days ahead of the deadline, which earned our group special recognition from the instructor.

Finally, while I did not major in economics, my coursework at Ave Maria included three economics courses which fortified my interest in and commitment to free market principles. Cato's tradition of promoting policies to support free markets and individual liberty is right in line with my personal ideals, making me an excellent cultural fit for the organization.

I have attached my resume for your consideration. I would welcome the opportunity to speak with you regarding the Media Relations Coordinator position at the Cato Institute. If you have any questions or need additional information, I can be reached by phone at 202-555-0000 and by email at ave.student@my.avemaria.edu. I am available to begin work the week of May 20, 2013. Thank you for your time, and I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Ave Student

Additional Cover Letter Resources

College Central – *www.CollegeCentral.com/AveMaria*

Login to your College Central account and review the resources in the Career Advice Media Library and Job Search Kit sections on the right hand side of the page.

About.com- http://jobsearch.about.com/od/coverlettersamples/a/coverlettsample.htm

Tons of links with plenty of samples.

Wetfeet.com

Full of articles, advice and company information, this site also includes a section on the resume and cover letter.

Recommended reading:
http://old.wetfeet.com/advice-tools/resume-cover-letter/create-a-winning-cover-letter

Books

The following titles are available for short-term check out from the Career Services Office:

- *202 Great Cover Letters* by Michael Bertrus
- *Knock 'em Dead Cover Letters* by Martin Yate
- *Knock 'em Dead: Secrets & Strategies for First-Time Job Seekers* by Martin Yate

Ave Maria University Career Services

Schedule an appointment with Career Services to have your cover letter reviewed! Appointment scheduling now available online at https://AveMariaCareerServices.acuityscheduling.com. Visit our social media pages for additional articles regarding best practices for cover letters.

Facebook: https://www.Facebook.com/AMUCareerServices
LinkedIn: www.Linkedin.com/in/AMUCareerServices/
Twitter: https://Twitter.com/AMUCareers