

## Framework for Crafting a Cover Letter

A cover letter is likely the first document a potential employer will read when reviewing your application. *Don't make it the last!* This is your opportunity to introduce yourself to an employer, and it is critical to make a positive first impression.

If nothing else, your cover letter must address the bare bones of a job inquiry:

- Why are you writing?
- Why you are interested in applying?
- Why are you a good candidate?

But nobody wants to hire bare bones. An effective cover letter should give your readers something to sink their teeth into. While you cannot - and should not - tell your entire life story in a cover letter, you can provide a taste of who you are as a scholar, a professional and an individual. An effective cover letter should make the reviewer want to learn more about you. Better yet: It should make them want to hire you!

### Tips for Writing an Effective Cover Letter

- Do your homework - Conduct background research on the organization to get a sense of its mission and culture.
- Review the qualifications - Read the job description carefully to identify the specific skills and qualifications the employer is looking for, and make a list.
- Connect the dots - Read through your resume and transcripts for experiences that are relevant to the requirements of the position and the values of the organization.
- Aim for depth, not breadth - Your cover letter should *not* be a summary of your resume; it should make the reader interested in reading your resume.
- Show, don't tell - Demonstrate that you possess the attitudes, experiences and skills the employer is looking for by focusing on relevant experiences and accomplishments.
- Convey your distinction - Set yourself apart from other candidates by telling your story in a way that highlights your unique strengths.
- Be passionate, and sincere - Whether big, small, not-for-profit, federal, philanthropic or money-grubbing, all organizations want their employers to care. Make it clear that you are enthusiastic about the position, and that you are invested in the field. But make sure your enthusiasm is sincere!

# Structure of a Cover Letter

## Formatting considerations

**Typeface** = Professional and legible, not distracting.

**Font size** = 12 point

**Margins** = 1 " minimum

**Spacing** = Single

**File name** = Include ***your name*** in the name you give the document.

For example: "Sandy.Loam\_Cover-letter.pdf"

## 1. Heading

- ❑ Your name, address, e-mail, and phone number

## 2. Date

- ❑ Month, Day, Year

## 3. Inside address

- ❑ Name of recipient (if available)
- ❑ Title of recipient
- ❑ Company name
- ❑ Company address

## 4. Subject line (optional)

- ❑ State the name of the position or program for which you are applying  
*Re: Director of NASA*

## 5. Salutation

- ❑ Address the recipient with his or her full name, and the appropriate prefix:  
*Dear Dr. Albert Einstein:*
- ❑ If you do not have the name of an individual, address the letter:  
*To Whom It May Concern:*

## 6. Opening paragraph

- ❑ State the purpose of your inquiry
- ❑ Explain why you are interested in applying
- ❑ Convey knowledge about the organization
- ❑ Articulate how you can contribute to their mission

## **7. Body paragraphs**

- ❑ Provide concrete examples that highlight relevant skills
- ❑ Explain how your unique strengths will benefit the organization
- ❑ Demonstrate that your interests align with those of the organization
- ❑ Show how the position fits within your career trajectory

## **8. Conclusion**

- ❑ Reiterate your enthusiasm for the position:  
*I am excited about the opportunity to be involved in...*
- ❑ Express an intent to follow up:  
*I would love to learn more about this position...*
- ❑ Encourage them to contact you:  
*Please feel free to contact me by phone at 555-1234, or by e-mail at [student@umass.edu](mailto:student@umass.edu), to discuss my qualifications...*
- ❑ Say thank you:  
*Thank you for your consideration.*

## **9. Complimentary close**

*Sincerely,*

Type your full name

A signature is a nice touch, but not mandatory.

**Good luck!**