



How to Write a Cover Letter

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What is a Cover Letter, and Do I Need One?

The cover letter introduces you to a specific individual at an organization. It is a concise (one page), confident (yes, you are), and professional document that accompanies your resume.

You may not always need a cover letter, but if you have the opportunity to submit one, we recommend that you do so, even if it is not required.

Do Recruiters Actually Read Cover Letters?

Recruiters and hiring manager have mixed reviews about whether they want a cover letter or not. About 53% of employers prefer that a resume be accompanied by a cover letter, even if they do not actually read the cover letter. It can sometimes be the item that pushes them over the edge to choose to interview a candidate. If there is any chance your cover letter could be the tie breaker between you and another candidate, you should write it!

One thing is for sure: if you write one, make it worth the read! Don't use boring content that makes you sound like every other candidate. This guide will show you both formatting and content to help you be more memorable.

7 Cover Letter Mistakes that Will Cost you the Interview

1. **Typos, Grammatical Errors, Sloppiness** – 80% of recruiters say that mistakes like these will automatically land you in the rejection pile.
2. **Length** – Do not go over one (1) page.
3. **Re-stating your resume** – If they want to see your resume content, they can read your resume. The cover letter is an opportunity for you to show a little personality and whet their appetite to read your resume.
4. **Not addressing your letter to a specific person** – Always find the recruiter's name! This shows you did your research.
5. **Not showing personality** – This is the place to tell your story! Showcase your skills through tangible/concrete examples.
6. **Not Telling a Story** – People are more likely to remember details about you when it is told in story form. So instead of stating you are a team player, tell me about a time when you led a team and your impact.
7. **Making it all about you** – Okay, yes, the cover letter is about you, but only in relation to the company's needs and how you can fill them. So, while you are showcasing your skills and qualifications, make sure these stories are shared in context of what the organization is looking for.

Cover Letter Formatting & Aesthetics

The Basics:

- ✓ Your **header/contact information** and formatting should look exactly like it looks on your resume. This will brand your complete packet, and keep it looking consistent from cover letter to resume to references (if references are needed). Think font family, size, style.
- ✓ **Spacing:** Single space within paragraphs and double-space between paragraphs.
- ✓ **Do not indent** the first line of each paragraph.

- ✓ **One** page in length!
- ✓ **Font** – use the same font family/style/size to what you used on your resume. Generally, size 10 – 12 works for most. Most people prefer sans serif fonts like Calibri, Verdana, or Century Gothic, which is what you are reading right now.
- ✓ **Margins** can be anywhere from .25 to 1 inch.
- ✓ **Center the content** of the letter on the page **vertically**. You want to avoid being lop-sided towards the top or bottom. See example cover letters below for what we mean by this.

Can I Be Creative?

In your writing style, yes! In your formatting, probably no. Graphic resumes and cover letters are best utilized by graphic designers, interior designers, marketing/advertising folks – “the creative” fields. We know Canva is fun to use, but most employers are looking more at the content of your letter than how pretty it looks. Trust us, we've asked.

Components of the Cover Letter (For print or PDF upload)

This section applies to those who will be uploading their cover letter to a company website/online job board, or if you are physically sending a cover letter. [Another section](#) will cover what to do if you are emailing the cover letter.

Your Name & Contact Information

- ✓ You may choose to write your full and formal name or an abbreviation of your name. Any of the below are acceptable; however, it should match how you list it on your resume.
 - Catherine A. Moody
 - Cathy Moody
 - Catherine “Catie” Moody
- ✓ Include your mobile number and email. **Pro Tip:** Only list one number and one email, unless you are an international student and have both a US based number and one from your country of origin.
- ✓ Addresses are more optional these days; in the past, it was common practice to list a full mailing address. Today, you can consider only listing City, ST if you prefer, or no address at all. No one is going to snail mail you.
- ✓ Consider adding your LinkedIn URL or a URL to an online portfolio/blog/website. **Pro Tip:** If using a link to your LinkedIn – make sure to create a custom URL so that it doesn't include a bunch of random letters/numbers after your name.

The Date

The next thing after your name and contact info is the date. Typically, the date you are sending the letter. It may be in any of the below formats:

2 February 2022

February 22, 2022

2/22/2022 or 2/22/22

Address Block of the Employer/Recruiter

Type up an address block for the employer to include the following information:

- ✓ A specific person's name to whom you are sending it to (e.g. Mr. or Ms. FirstName LastName)
- ✓ The individual's job title
- ✓ The company/organization name
- ✓ City, ST Zip Code

Pro Tip: Be sure to address the letter to a specific person. When we say specific individual, we mean addressed to a real person not a job title (e.g. Ms. Karla Cordero). Do not generically address to "Hiring Manager" or "To Whom It May Concern" if you can avoid it. If you do not know who is responsible for hiring, look on the company's website, call their main line to ask, or try sleuthing it out on LinkedIn. Finding a specific person to address the cover letter to is one way to set your self apart from other candidates.

The RE Line

One suggestion we have to help you write a more compelling cover letter is to include a RE line. RE stands for regarding. This simple line allows the recruiter to quickly identify what position you are applying for. You would include the position title and/or the job ID number.

Pro Tip: Use all caps, bold, and underline. Here are examples:

RE: MARKETING INTERNSHIP

RE: ICU NURSE – ID#7775

Greeting

This is where you address the person you are sending the letter to. Remember, for the address block we indicated you ought to find the name of a specific person to address the letter to. Yup, we still want you to find a specific name. After their name you may either use a comma or a colon.

- ✓ Dear Mr. LastName,
- ✓ Dear Ms. LastName:
- ✓ Dear Dr. LastName,

Paragraphs – the “Meat of the Letter”

This is where the excitement begins! Here is where you hook the reader with a compelling first paragraph, add concrete examples of your skills and character qualities in a second paragraph, and then wrap it up. We will go more in depth on what to put in each paragraph in the next section of this guide.

Closing

It is up to you what you use as your closing; however, some typical ways include:

- ✓ Sincerely,
- ✓ Warm regards,
- ✓ Kind regards,

Then leave a couple of spaces and type your name. If you are physically sending your letter, we recommend you write your signature in those spaces.

Cover Letter by Paragraph

Paragraph #1 – The Intro

Be memorable—don't start it the same way everyone else does. . . "I am writing to apply for the job of . . .blah, blah, blah." Boring! This opening is sure to set the reader into an afternoon snooze! Form letters demonstrate a lack of initiative and creativity. It lacks personality, and that isn't who you are! So stand out from the others by writing something more compelling and tailoring the letter to the organization and its specific needs.

You can start with any of the following:

- **A story** about how you got interested in the field/industry.
- **Connect the dots**—if your major or current work history is not related to the position, show the employer how it is.
- **Name drop**—did someone recommend you apply for the position? Do you know someone at the company who has influence and can vouch for you?
- **Address a concern** up front—e.g. "Before you dismiss my candidacy for being underqualified, let me show you how I am." Or, "Yes, there is an employment gap on my resume, but what you don't see is that during those two years I overcame a rare medical condition, and will use the same determination to help your company."

The goal in your first paragraph is to get the reader to continue reading! Here are some example first paragraphs.

When I was eight years old I started my first business. Dad said if I wanted a new pair of tennis shoes I would have to save up, and my allowance money wasn't going to get me to my goal. So, I sold trash bags door to door to my neighbors. Within three months I met my goal, got my kicks, and was hooked on sales.

What does biology and business analytics have in common? Great question, and the answer is quite a lot! As a biology major in the lab I learned to test out theories and assumptions, much like what is listed in your job description.

I think I might be obsessed with design.

Not obsessed in a bad way, but obsessed as in not being able to get enough of it.

For me, it's about developing concepts. It's about coming up with new ideas and new ways to look at a problem. It's about laying something out and realizing it's the perfect blend of aesthetics.

I am very interested in the position at Dallas Northway campus, which I heard about through Amanda Mercado, a member there. What excited me about the position is the great emphasis and importance The Village Church puts on groups. We were created to be in community and we serve the Lord best in community with other believers. Having such community is crucial, not only in developing one's relationship with God, but also in bringing other people to Him.

Middle Paragraph(s)

Here is where you begin to showcase how what you bring to the table will add value to their organization and meets the needs of the role you are applying to. You can do this as just one well-developed paragraph, or you can split it across several paragraphs. Tell them your **strengths/skills**. You won't touch on every qualification or work requirement, but find the themes and touch on those, backing them up with concrete examples and stories.

- ✓ **Show don't tell**—share a strength, and then briefly show either the results you got from it or give a specific example of using that strength. E.g. "I'm a great communicator. For example, I was selected out of over 80 individuals to deliver a graduation speech to over 900 attendees."
- ✓ **Relate them to the job posting**—look for themes, or what seems to be important to the organization and what they are looking for in their ideal hire. Focus on one to three of these qualities and show how you used them in your previous experience.
- ✓ **Research the organization**—show appropriate knowledge of the company you want to represent. The internet is a great tool for gathering information about government or business employers. However, networking is the best tool.

Pro Tip: Use the CAR method to show your skills! Challenge + Action = Results. It's a concise way to say, "here is the context of what I was challenged to take on, here are the action steps I took and this was the outcome."

Most recently I volunteered on a medical mission trip to Peru. I hiked on average five miles a day to rural villages in order to provide health education and basic medical care. In the week I was there, I served over 100 villagers.

One experience that reinforced my desire to work in the NICU, was assisting with a childbirth in the middle of hut with extremely limited medical supplies. This experience led me to my preceptorship at St. Mary's. . . .

I've been lucky. I've had some incredible design experience in the last few years. I've worked as a full-time designer for *Fort Worth Weekly Magazine*; I've developed entire magazine comps for a new upscale publication; and I've even created Web sites, DVD materials, and more. All the details are in my portfolio and resume. I'm excited to parlay my experience into a full-time position at *Vogue* magazine. I'll be moving to New York on September 3rd and would love the opportunity to talk more about possibilities at the magazine.

In my junior year of college, I was fortunate to be hired as a private tutor. Now I am the one bringing subjects from history to science and math alive for children ages six to 16, and assisting them to achieve success. An average week for me includes over 30 hours of week tutoring in addition to carrying a full credit load. It is an honor to be specifically requested as a tutor for children because of my proven record of connecting with students and them meeting their academic goals.

Additionally (and close to my heart), I served over 200 hours of community service over the last three years in Christ Fellowship Church's Special Needs Ministry. This consisted of leading and helping special needs children and adults from ages 5-25 in learning how to properly ride horses and encouraged them to build a relationship with these loving animals.

Closing Paragraph

Wrap it up! Sum up the letter by doing the following:

- ✓ Restate your interest
- ✓ Thank them for their consideration of your candidacy
- ✓ Perhaps indicate you will follow up

Thank you for your consideration of my candidacy and taking the time to read this letter. I am excited about the opportunity to work with the Entrusted team, and look forward to the next steps in the application process.

Warm regards,

Dorian Manuela

Dorian Manuela

How to Send the Cover Letter

We get asked this all the time! Do you attach the cover letter to an email as a document, or does the content go in the body of the email? The answer is yes. Either is okay. Below are some guidelines either way:

- ✓ If **sending via email** – put the **RE line** in the subject line field. Then either put the cover letter in the body of the email or write a brief email indicating you have attached your cover letter and resume. Don't forget to actually attach those documents! If you opt to have your cover letter in the body of the email, no need to include the date or the receiver's address block.
- ✓ If **printing**, use **resume paper** with the same color, weight, and texture on your resume, cover letter, and references. White, off-white, and some pastels are appropriate colors. After printing, do not forget to **sign your name** in the spaces you left between your closing and your typed name.

Additional Cover Letter Tips

- ✓ Don't forget to **spell-check**!
- ✓ If you say you will follow up on your cover letter, do it. **Follow through** is essential.
- ✓ Have someone proof read your letter.

Cover Letter Gallery

The following pages provide samples of cover letters written by PBA students. These samples show you various formats and writing styles, including different ways to begin your cover letter in a way that makes you stand out from the rest of the crowd.

Sailfish Jack561-803-2000 | sailfish_jack@pba.edu | linkedin/in/sjack

MO, Day, YYYY

Mr./Ms. FirstName LastName

Title

Organization

Address 1

City, State Zip

RE: [LIST POSITION APPLYING FOR]

Dear Mr./Ms. LastName:

Paragraph 1: Engage me with a story. Tell me how you became interested in the field, industry or the position. This is a good area to incorporate the research you have done about the organization. The employer will only spend about 20-30 seconds reading your cover letter – if you have a name to drop, do it here. This may also be a place to name drop someone you know who referred you to the organization or works at the organization. In some cases this is the place to address things like—how the position and your academics are related, even though they don't seem to be, or why they should consider you if you are under/over qualified for the position.

Paragraph 2: This is where you show them, not tell them how you are qualified. Give specific examples to back up the qualifications, perhaps relevant classwork or experiences you have had in internships and other job opportunities. Do not repeat information directly from your resume but highlight one or two specific examples that are the best representation of your assets for each organization.

Paragraph 3: Wrap up and express your interest. Refer the reader to the enclosed resume and indicate your follow-up intentions. Take responsibility to follow-up. This shows initiative, perseverance, and follow-through. Don't forget to thank the potential employer for his/her time, consideration, and attention. *[I would welcome the opportunity to talk with you about my qualifications for the (position) I appreciate your time and consideration.]* Include a summarizing concluding statement *[I am confident that my education, work experience, and enthusiasm make me an ideal candidate/will be of value to (organization).]* Make sure to center everything from the “date” to “Enclosure” vertically on the page. Do not leave a bunch of white space at the bottom. It is okay to have a short and sweet cover letter!

Sincerely,

[sign your name here – with a real pen!]

Sailfish Jack

Enclosure: Resume

Brianna Parker

900 S. Olive Avenue | West Palm Beach, FL | 561-123-1234 | Brianna_parker@pba.edu

April 28, 2022

Mr. Todd Mazer
ICU and 3E Telemetry Director
Palms West Hospital
13001 Southern Blvd.
Loxahatchee, FL 33470

RE: RN POSITION

Dear Mr. Mazer:

Five years ago, my seven-year-old sister's immune system began attacking her own tissue, causing pain and swelling in her joints. Six weeks later, the doctors diagnosed her with Juvenile Rheumatoid Arthritis, and she began the journey toward remission. Throughout the process, the care and compassion shown to my sister by her nurses was amazing. The encouraging nurses had an enormous impact on both my sister and me. I decided to become a nurse because I want to have that same positive impact while caring for my patients.

I am an enthusiastic learner who is quick on my feet. I have excellent time management skills because I have balanced my studies and athletics for four years, and I am at the top graduate of my nursing class at Palm Beach Atlantic University. I have gained experience both at Palms West during my preceptorship in the ICU with Julie Brooks and Linda Neyman and in the community as a home health aide for Redi Nurse in Port Saint Lucie. I am confident that my education, work experience, and motivation make me an ideal candidate for an RN position at Palms West.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Regards,

Brianna Parker

Sandra D. Lucas

West Palm Beach, FL ■ 561-123-1234 ■ sandra_lucas@pba.edu

July 25, 2022

Ms. Jamie Kirk
Hiring Manager
Thrivent Financial
625 Fourth Ave. S.
Minneapolis, MN 55415

RE: FINANCIAL ANALYST POSTION

Dear Ms. Kirk:

Why would a biology major want to work in finance?

That's a great question, and one I've asked myself on several occasions. At first glance it seems like a disconnect, but upon reflection, it actually makes quite a bit of sense.

Finance and biology share much in common. Finance is all about creating something (wealth) by using a variety of tested but ultimately unproven techniques. Very little in finance is definite. Even though a fund or a stock is performing well now, there's no way to know how it will do in the future.

Biology is pretty similar. It's also about knowing the background, studying the conditions, and making educated guesses about what will happen in the future. It's rooted in research and facts and knowledge.

My interest in finance doesn't just come from the biology lab. It also comes from a host of activities outside the classroom. I started our university's first finance association, managing a collective portfolio that earned a 23 percent rate of return. I've also had two great finance internships.

I hope to get the chance to talk to you more about how a biology major can make a difference at Morgan Stanley. I'll plan to follow up with you in a week's time.

Regards,

Sandra D. Lucas

Bullets Emphasizing Similar Roles**Shannon Hunihan**

West Palm Beach, FL
561-123-1234 | Shannon_Hunihan@pba.edu

April 4, 2021

Ms. Sandy Piper
Chief Marketing Officer
ABC Company
1234 Main Street
West Palm Beach, FL 33401

RE: PR and Social Media Specialist at Cultural Council of Palm Beach County

Dear Ms. Piper,

You need a people focused, marketing guru with a passion for creativity paired with an attention to detail and excellent communication skills in order to take your vision for the Palm Beaches as an arts and cultural hub to the next level. My experience in various areas of business and love for the West Palm Beach area makes me an ideal candidate for the current position available at your company. I have extensive public speaking and project management experience and have worked with all forms of social media as well.

Born and raised on both coasts of Florida, I understand the unique culture and community that we are creating in this part of the country. Please take a look at my attached resume for a detailed look at what I have been up to the last few years. Here's a snapshot of some of my latest commitments:

- Marketing Coordinator at LinkedIn Club for CEOs, VPs, and Directors
- Marketing and Social Media Content Curator at Non-Profits First
- Marketing Intern at Neal Communities of Southwest Florida in Sarasota
- Admissions Assistant, Undergraduate Assistant, and Tour Guide at Palm Beach Atlantic University in West Palm Beach, FL
- Customer Service Manager at Jumpin Fun Sports Trampoline Park in Sarasota, FL
- Global Project Leader at Palm Beach Atlantic University in West Palm Beach, Florida; Hamburg, Germany; Barcelona, Spain; and Antigua, Guatemala

I'd be happy to provide greater detail about my skills and experience during an interview. Please call me at your earliest convenience. Thank you, in advance, for your consideration.

Best Regards,

Shannon Hunihan

Hannah L. Johnson

12345 W 57th Terrace Shawnee, KS 66226 • Hannah_Johnson@pba.edu (913) 999-9874

August 1, 2021

Ms. Terri Ferguson
Human Resource Manager
BRIDGES at Riviera Beach
2831 Avenue S.
Riviera Beach, FL 33404

Dear Ms. Ferguson,

I am writing in response to your advertisement for the Targeted Case Manager position, posted on the Community Partners website. After reading your job description, I am confident that my skills for assisting others and my passion for working with children and families, make me a perfect match for this position.

I would bring to your company a broad range of skills, including:

- **Strong written and oral communication** as evidenced by numerous research papers written
- **Eighteen credit hours of Child & Family Development courses** and a Bachelor of Science degree in Psychology
- **Efficiency in attending to children's needs** conveyed through leadership roles working with children
- **High level of technical knowledge** as measured by performance with SPSS, Microsoft Excel, & Microsoft Word
- **Proficient organizational and interpersonal skills**
- **Ability to work well with team and individual tasks** achieved through team and individual research projects
- **Excellent multitasking skills** as demonstrated by involvement in numerous projects and activities and jobs

I would welcome the opportunity to further discuss this position with you. I have enclosed my resume for your review, and I look forward to hearing from you. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Hannah Johnson

Alan Harrold

West Palm Beach, FL 33401
561-123-1234 • alan_harrold@pba.edu

June 3, 2022

Mr. Al Quiton
Senior Talent Acquisition Manager
Production Toolbox
3840 SW 30th Ave.
Ft. Lauderdale, FL 33312

RE: POSITION OPENING | REFERRAL

Dear Mr. Quiton,

Thank you for allowing me an opportunity to introduce myself. I am writing in regard to the to the position at Production Toolbox, which I heard about you through Nick Popa. I worked with Nick and Tony with Espo Production while volunteering at Sunfest, in West Palm Beach, about a month ago. During the short time working I became very interested in the various facets of your operation and industry.

I am a recent graduate from Palm Beach Atlantic University with a business management degree, specifically the small business and entrepreneurship track. I did an internship in social media using twitter and Instagram, and am very familiar with how they operate. Video production is of interest to me because it requires creativity and a hands-on approach. What peaked my interest is not just the production aspect but the whole process. I may not have much experience in the field but I am anxious to learn and am a quick learner.

Please be assured that I am highly capable of handling any position and representing your company very well. Thanks for taking the time and considering my application.

Sincerely,

Alan Harrold