

COVER LETTER TIPS

1. A COVER LETTER is a one-page professional document that highlights specific reasons why you would be a good fit for the position. Beyond seeking to understand your skills, employers read cover letters to see if you can write in a cohesive and compelling manner, and to understand if you would be a good fit for the organization. Great cover letters demonstrate your motivation to work for an employer and feature **EXAMPLES** of soft skills that compliment your resume.

2. PREPARE by highlighting aspects of a job description that you are qualified to perform. Jot down examples from internships, volunteerism and coursework. Tell a story that shows how you match the job duties. If the job seeks team-players, show **EVIDENCE** demonstrating that you work well on teams.

3. FORMAT makes all the difference. Create letterhead or use the same header as your resume. Use formal salutations. Single space paragraphs with a double-space in-between. Do not indent. Print, check and read your cover letter out loud. Have a peer read it for structure and flow.

4. CONTENT earns you interviews if you show distinctiveness. Consider a 3 - 4 paragraph letter with an introduction that **CONNECTS** you to the reader; middle paragraphs featuring experiences that **MATCH** what the **EMPLOYER SEEKS** and a closing paragraph that indicates **NOT** what the company will do for you, but how will you contribute.

5. ESTABLISH TONE that mirrors the organization's culture. Do you seek to enter a government agency? A start-up? A hospital setting? A nonprofit? Are the job duties intellectual? Creative? Do research on what drives the work culture and strike a complimentary tone. **SELL YOUR STRENGTHS** and **DISPLAY HUMILITY**. Humor and sarcasm are tough to convey well. When in doubt, err on the conservative side.

NEED A SAMPLE? TURN THE PAGE

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Utilize the same header as your resume here

Your Street Address
Your City, State and Zip code
Your area code and phone number (*optional*)
Your email address (*optional*)

Date

(1 - 4 blank lines, depending on length of letter)

Name of Recipient
Title of Recipient
Organization
Street Address
City, State, Zip code

Dear Mr./Ms./Dr. Last Name of Recipient (*or if name is unknown, use the job title of person most likely to receive documents*):

PARAGRAPH 1 (about 4 sentences)

Start by stating your reason for writing, and don't forget to name the position you are applying for. If you've already talked to the person to whom you are sending the letter, or, if you have a connection to the company, indicate it in your introduction: *"I am writing to express my sincere interest in Mayor Garcetti's Economic Development Internship that I learned about at Fall Networking Night one week ago. I appreciate you taking the time to talk to me about the opportunity as our conversation inspired me to..."* State why you are interested in the position and what you can contribute to the organization. *"Since arriving to USC, I have pursued internships and academics related to policy writing, communication, and business development, and I believe I have the passion and skillsets to contribute meaningfully to your organization."* Offer at least one sincere compliment (from your company research) about what the organization is doing well that has motivated you to apply to the position and/or organization.

PARAGRAPH 2/3

Explain how your academic background and the skills you have acquired from other experiences, such as internships, part-time jobs, and extra-curricular activities, make you a qualified candidate for the position (i.e., how do you/your experiences connect to the opportunity). *"My internship experience thus far has helped to realize how critical it is to interact with constituents in the public sector, as successful communication of policy issues is what ultimately fuels community support and participation. For example, last year, I collaborated with the project manager at the City of Alhambra to survey its residents in order to develop a cogent business strategy that would benefit them."* Indicate what you can do for the employer based on his/her needs. If you have qualifications that are not noted on your resumé, here is your opportunity to discuss them, but aim for two to three examples only.

PARAGRAPH 3/4

Use your research of the company and the people who work there to mention something specific that connects you (or your mission) to the firm itself. Restate exactly how you would contribute if given an offer. *"If given the opportunity to join your team this summer, I would utilize my advanced computer skills in R and Excel and my passion for research to thoroughly investigate issues, to write policy that matters to our constituents and to support the firm as it grows."* If the employer asks for salary requirements, either state that your salary requirements are commensurate with industry standards or provide a salary range and express that you are willing to negotiate. Thank the employer for their consideration.

Sincerely,



Your Name Typed

If you're able, make a digital copy of your signature so you can copy it into your cover letter. It is not required but can be a nice addition. If you do, be sure to also type out your name below your signature.