

# Cover Letters

(804) 289-8547 | careerservices.richmond.edu  
Office Hours: M-F, 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. | Drop-in Hours: M-F, 2 to 4 p.m.



Use the following business letter format if you are creating a cover letter document to attach to an email, upload to an online application, or mail to an employer. If you are writing a “cover letter-ish” email to an employer and attaching your resume, you can omit the return address, date and address at the top of the letter, as well as the signature and enclosure line at the bottom of the letter. Your email should follow the same basic paragraph guidelines outlined below, but you can be briefer since you are writing an email rather than a letter.

Your Street  
City, State Zip

Date

Employer name  
Employer title  
Employer organization  
Employer Street  
City, State Zip

**SALUTATIONS**

- Use a proper salutation (*Dr., Mr., Ms., Mrs., Mx., etc.*), and do NOT use the first name. For example: “Dear Dr. Jones:”
- Avoid outdated and ambiguous salutations such as “Dear Sir or Madam” or “To Whom It May Concern”.
- All effort should be made to have the letter addressed to a specific individual within a company. If you really can’t find the hiring party’s name, use their job title or omit the salutation. It’s better to say “Dear Marketing Manager” than “Dear Sir or Madam.”

Dear (Dr./Mr./Ms./Mrs./Mx.) Name:

The **first paragraph** should state **why you are writing**. Identify the position you are seeking and the source from which you learned of the opportunity (company website, newspaper, professor, etc.). If you are inquiring about potential opportunities, describe the type of position you are seeking. Specific statements are far more effective than vague generalities. Specify your interest in and reflect your knowledge of the organization and position. (Letters that take this specific, marketing-oriented approach are usually far more successful than form letters in a mass mailing.) Capture the interest of the reader in these opening lines. This paragraph may be only two to three sentences.

The **second and/or third paragraph** should **make the connection** between the position requirements and your background, skills and experiences. Using the position description, identify three or four specific skills or experiences to focus on. Use specific examples to demonstrate that you possess the skills and experiences they are looking for.

Do not simply repeat your résumé. Your cover letter serves to draw out themes from your résumé. Outline the strongest and most relevant skills and qualifications you have to contribute. Back up these statements with *specific* examples—offer the reader proof of your skills.

The **final paragraph** should **restate your enthusiasm** and interest in the position, along with a future plan of action. Indicate a fit or match between you and the organization or opportunity. If you provide a follow up date, be sure to do so within that time frame. (Create a system to record what you have sent to whom and when you have indicated you will follow up. Note any follow up.) If necessary, specify your preferred or most reliable contact information (email, phone, mail). Show your appreciation to the reader for their time and consideration.

Sincerely/Regards/Cordially/Yours truly,

*Sam Spider* (Sign the letter legibly in blue or black ink)

Sam Spider

**SPACING**

- Skip one line between paragraphs
- Skip two lines between the last paragraph and the closing
- Skip four lines between the closing and your typed name
- Skip two lines between your typed name and enclosure

Enclosure: résumé (name any other documents you are including; only include this line if you are physically mailing your cover letter)

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### WRITING A TARGETED COVER LETTER

#### Position Description

**Public Information Rep: Staff public info center, respond to public** questions and issues via telephone, written correspondence, and in person; provide info to the public and media; develop materials and weekly **press releases** for project; deliver presentations; coordinate with **transit agencies**. BA in Communication, PR, Liberal Arts, Public Administration, or related, **1-3 years related experience**. Strong verbal and written communication skills; **public speaking**; ability to work independently; **Microsoft Word, Excel, Access**. Send or fax resumes to...

#### Your Related Accomplishments

Responded to inquiries from students, alumni and general public regarding program and services offered by University office

Wrote public service announcements regarding community events

18 months office experience with major Richmond transportation agency

4 years work experience, 2 internships related to public affairs and promotions

Public speaking coursework

Computer skills listed on resume

#### DO

- PROOFREAD! Be sure your letter is free from any typographical, spelling or grammatical errors.
- Tailor your letter for each opportunity and tell the reader why you are qualified for the position.
- Mention something you know about the organization that is related to the position for which you are applying.
- Write clearly and simply; using industry specific keywords.
- Sign your cover letter (if mailing) and include your phone number, email and address.
- Exhibit your written communication skills (which are important to most employers).
- Check your layout for adequate margins and white space and see if it is centered top to bottom.
- Ensure the font style matches that of the résumé and is simple and easy to read.
- Use high quality résumé paper (if mailing)—the same paper on which you print your résumé.
- Convert the cover letter and résumé to PDF to ensure the formatting stays consistent.

#### DON'T

- Give a summary of your life, values, goals, etc. longer than 50 words.
- Describe, at length, your admiration for the company's history.
- Overuse the pronoun "I" or repeat your resume verbatim.
- Explain why you left your last job or want to leave your present one.
- Use a form letter and just change the company name.
- Include your salary requirements, unless asked to provide this information.
- Inflate or exaggerate your experience or qualifications.
- Hint that you are interested in virtually any job within that organization.