

Cover Letters

It's Your First Impression



Adapted with permission
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Why Bother with a Cover Letter?

- Highlight your unique talents and skills
- Identify how you are qualified for the position
- Arrange an interview to discuss employment possibilities

Customization is KEY!!



Guidelines to Remember

- Do not duplicate what is said on your resume.
 - The cover letter should highlight your resume
 - List reasons why it will be to the employers advantage to hire you.
- It's best to find out who is responsible for hiring and address the letter to that person.
- Keep it brief.
- Limited to one page.



Guidelines to Remember

- Plan your letter before you write it.
- Adapt the letter carefully to conditions of each job opportunity.
- Capture the attention of the prospective employer so the letter and resume are considered worth reading.
- Close your letter with a request for an interview.



Guidelines to Remember

- Avoid being too “wordy”. Be concise.
- Use good quality stationery and print the letter in a professional manner- avoid using form letters.
- Check and double check your grammar, spelling, and neatness.
- If emailing your cover letter and resume, ask what format the employer would like it in – PDF, Word etc.

Ask a friend, relative, or CECD staff member to review your letter prior to sending it to an employer.

Important Elements of a Cover Letter

1. The Greeting – why you're writing and how you heard about the job.
2. Knowledge of Employer – why you're interested in what they have to offer (what THEY have to offer).
 - Research, research, research
3. Your skills – Very brief highlight of skills matching job needs.
4. Closing – eager, thank you, look forward to opportunity to discuss further.

Introductory Paragraph – “The Greeting”

- Three possible techniques for creating a personalized and customized introductory paragraph include:
 - A personal contact (slide 8)
 - Specific company knowledge (slide 9)
 - A sincere compliment (slide 10)

A Personal Contact

For example...

- During recent discussions with Steve Temple, your Manager of Accounting, I became aware of your concern about the need to automate the accounts payable function. Perhaps I can be of help.

Specific Company Knowledge

For example...

- I read the article concerning Champion Corporation's use of modern organization development techniques in the August 2 issue of Business Week. I found this article very interesting, and it has prompted my decision to apply for employment with your company.

A Sincere Compliment

For example...

- A colleague of mine has told me of your excellent reputation as an executive search firm that specializes in the recruitment of financial executives.

Second Paragraph: “Knowledge of Employer”

Having researched the company this paragraph gives you an opportunity to discuss your interest in the company. How their goals and mission align with your own.

- “Your company interests me because ...”
- “Your company’s efforts to _____ attracted me because ...”

Third Paragraph “Your Skills”:

It is within this paragraph that you tailor your résumé to a particular job- use the job description to assist you. Tell the employer why you are a strong candidate for this position. Highlight relevant achievements, skills, and/or experience, mentioning the most interesting points on your résumé. Explain how you intend to help the employer and contribute to the organization.

- “The position of _____ would allow me to ...”
- “My qualifications and experience include ...”
- “The experience I have gained in the accounting field ...”

Fourth Paragraph “The Closing”:

This paragraph should be action-oriented. Express your interest in connecting with the employer to further discuss the position and/or your skills. Also, be sure to state how and when they may contact you. Do not assume an employer will contact you once you have sent your cover letter and résumé. It is your responsibility to follow up. Finally, thank the individual and mention that you are looking forward to meeting him or her.

- I look forward to discussing my experience and qualifications with you ...
- I will be in Caribou during the week of ...
- I will be contacting you ...

Elements of Bad Cover Letters

- Poor overall appearance
- Poor grammar, punctuation, and misspelled words
- Rambling – lack of focus
- Self-focused versus employer focused
- Bland, boring text
- Gross exaggeration – bragging
- Aggressive, pushy tone
- Self-depreciation



Sample Cover Letter

Jenny Jones
123 Park Ave.
Portland, ME 04101

Margaret W. Willis
Director
Peach Tree, Inc
7120 Forest Ave.
Portland, ME 04101

Dear Dr. Willis:

Having worked in two marketing firms as a volunteer and student intern, I was quite excited to learn from Dr. Jan Jenkins that you have an opening for a Marketing Associate at Peach Tree Incorporation. I would very much like to be considered for this position and feel qualified for several reasons.

According to Dr. Jenkins, you are interested in incorporating data driven marketing objectives into your firm's decision making and implementation efforts. I am not only committed to such an approach but, as my enclosed resume illustrates, I have had the opportunity to obtain valuable training in research and analysis. During my internships I designed and implemented marketing research projects in the Greater Portland community. The clients were enthusiastic about the end product, and I thoroughly enjoyed both planning and executing them.

I was also informed that many of your clients at Peach Tree Inc. are focused upon meeting the needs of culturally diverse populations. In addition to studying the culture of urban minorities, for the past two years I have led two alternative spring break trips to Louisiana. In doing so, was responsible for planning, budgeting and managing a group of 22 students for a week of volunteer service for Habitat for Humanity. I also participated in an international service trips to Haiti and Mexico where I volunteered for a global service organization.

I would appreciate the opportunity to discuss these and other experiences with you and to learn more about Peach Tree Incorporation. Please feel free to contact me during the day at (207) 555-1212, in the evenings at (207)555-1234, or via email at jenny.jones@maine.edu at your convenience. I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Sincerely,
Jenny Jones

NEED HELP?

Contact: Stacy Stewart

Coordinator of Career Services

100 Payson Smith Hall, Portland Campus

207/ 228-8156

sstewart@usm.maine.edu

<https://usm.maine.edu/community-engagement-career-development>