COVER LETTERS

WHY WRITE A COVER LETTER?

The purpose of the cover letter is to:
- introduce yourself – while making a connection to them
- demonstrate your interest – tell why you're applying to them in a genuine way
- generate their interest – tell them how you're the right fit for their vacancy
- draw attention to your resume – points out highlights of your resume

Hi! Pick Me!

Focus on what you can do for the employer, *not* what they can do for you. A cover letter presents a chance to *elaborate* on key aspects of your resume. Don't simply reiterate what's already on your resume.

Employers may read 100's of cover letters for a single job posting, many with similar word phrasing. It takes work and creativity to grab the reader's attention and show them why you are the best fit for the position. Generic cover letters will likely get dismissed with other generic applications.

BE PROFESSIONAL

- Cover letters should always be addressed to a specific person - do **not** use "to whom it may concern; sir; madam" – If needed, call the company to find out who to address the letter to.
- Your letter should never be no more than one page, and should be word processed (unless it is specifically requested by the employer that the letter be handwritten)
- Use a professional font with size 11 or 12. Most employers prefer short and to the point cover letters
- Send as a PDF whenever possible to minimize conversion errors

BE ENGAGING

- Don't just repeat what's on your resume; bridge the content of your resume to the posting with specifics
- Write a different cover letter for each job you apply for, customize information for each position / organization you are applying for, and try to demonstrate your specific qualifications for the position
- Tailor your cover letter to the needs of specific employers. Prioritize your cover letter with the information that is *most relevant* to the position for which you are applying.
- Show personality by demonstrating unique or nuanced characteristics you bring to the job – Stand out!
- Vary your sentence structure; do not start every sentence with "I". Consider using short personal narratives/anecdotes to create meaningful connection.
- Use 'unique-to-you phrases' and avoid over-used phrases. Include specifics such as numbers, percentages and facts to quantify/qualify and show results. (See the Word Phrasing handout)

RESEARCH SHOWS

- Conduct company research! Research will also help you discover what the company values. Make a personal connection with any shared values and highlight this in the introduction of your cover letter
- You can even research similar cover letters for similar positions to get started
- Research separates the good cover letters from the generic ones

Your Name (use the same header as your resume)
Your Address

Today's Date

Company Name
Company Address
Company Address

Re: (Identify what position you are applying for; and the competition number if there is one)

Greeting: (use the correct contact person's name)

First Paragraph:

- Your goal is to capture the reader's attention and encourage them to read on!
- Demonstrate your knowledge of the organization and why you want to work for them specifically
- Reference their mission/reputation/accomplishments to make a positive personal connection.

Second Paragraph:

- Market your skills, education, knowledge, and experience using specific quantifiable and qualitative details (see Word Phrasing handout)
- Match your qualifications with their needs based on the job posting. Give specific examples of how your strongest and most relevant qualifications meet the requirements of the role
- List any key accomplishments or demonstrated skill that relate to the position

Third Paragraph: (optional)

- Use short narratives to highlight personal accomplishments, projects, or passions that are relevant to the position
- Consider drawing a personal connection to the role, company or industry
- Demonstrate strong writing qualities

Last Paragraph:

- Detail how the employer can get in touch with you
- Consider conveying your enthusiasm in applying while referencing your first paragraph
- Express your appreciation for their time and consideration

Closing, (sincerely/regards/respectfully)

(Insert a digital signature if you are able)

Typed Name