



UNIVERSITY OF
CENTRAL
ARKANSAS™

STUDENT AFFAIRS
CAREER SERVICES

A GUIDE TO

COVER LETTERS



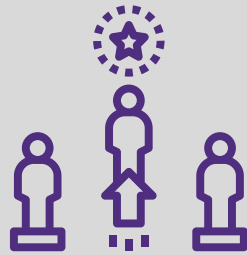
**CAREER
SERVICES**

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The Purpose

OF COVER LETTERS



A tool to provide experiential information early in application processes.

Cover letters are typically required in application processes for professional positions or graduate and professional schools. Since these application processes will generally require candidates to submit a resume as well, the cover letter should not repeat information already provided in the resume.



An opportunity for you to choose what to discuss with employers.

Cover letters are an opportunity for you to exercise control throughout the hiring process because you decide what you wish to discuss with a potential employer or organization. Remember, cover letters - similar to other application materials - help you to obtain an interview or move on to the next step in the hiring process.

Cover Letter Standards

Page Length: Cover letters should not exceed one page in length.

Sections: Cover letters are typically built with three sections.

First Section

- 1 Personal introduction
- 2 State the position of interest
- 3 State how you learned about the open position

Second Section

This is the main content of the letter. Highlight 1-2 work experiences that showcase your quality work and competence for the open position.

- Be selective - put your best foot forward.
- Discuss your experiences, accomplishments, and skills.
- Look at the qualifications on the position posting. Choose experiences that demonstrate your preparedness.
- Tell a story to exemplify your skills and keep the reader's attention.
- Focus on what you can do for that company instead of what the company can do for you.

Third Section

Request an interview or consideration for the position.

State when and how you will follow up with the employer.

Invite the employer to contact you.

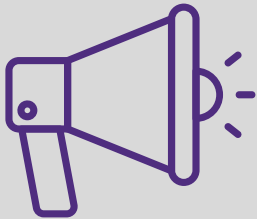
Thank the employer for their time and consideration.



Cover letters should be formatted as a business letter (see page 9).



The writing showcased in a cover letter should be formal. The writing should demonstrate your ability to write professionally.



Cover letters should NOT restate the information provided in your resume



Cover letters are an opportunity to tell your career stories. These stories should be about situations that you contributed high quality work to produce results. Share lessons you learned you will carry into future positions.

Template Tips

Each cover letter that you submit should be tailored to the positions for which you are applying.

Use the following tips to write multiple cover letters without sacrificing quality or time.

Create your own cover letter template.

- ✓ The template should have areas to input information that is specific to an organization.
- ✓ The template should have interchangeable second sections to utilize your best experiences for the unique job descriptions.
- ✓ Areas of the template that need to be updated before each cover letter submission should be **BOLDED, HIGHLIGHTED, AND IN ALL CAPITAL LETTERS** so you never accidentally submit a cover letter with incorrect information.
- ✓ Triple check that you update the following before submitting a cover letter: position title, organization, date, address, letter recipient.

Write 5–7 experiences to use in the second section of your cover letter.

- Each experience should be roughly one paragraph in length.
- Choose from these 5-7 experiences to create a unique second section of your cover letter tailored for each position application.
- To determine which experiences to include in each cover letter:
 - Examine the job description and identify what skills the organization emphasizes.
 - Select your experiences that best match the description or emphasized skills.

Writing Prompts

**Prompts to Write Your 5–7 experiences.
Ask yourself the following questions in the
context of your career experiences and your
approach to work.**

What did I used to do that I don't do now?
What situations or learning experiences did I grow from?
What changed in the environment from when you started
the position versus when you left? How did you contribute
to the changes / improvements?
What changed in how you approach your work from when
you started the position versus now?
What challenged you in your last position?
What were some of your favorite experiences in your last
position?
What were your most memorable experiences in your last
position?
What questions did you have when you first started your
last position?
What did you not like about your position when you
started and how did that change throughout your time of
employment?
What were new experiences that you gained from your
last position?



COVER LETTER RUBRIC

	EXEMPLARY	APPROACHING STANDARDS	BEGINNING
BUSINESS FORMAT & OVERALL WRITING QUALITY	Cover letter uses correct business format with date and addresses at the top, and a signature at the bottom. The letter is clear, concise, and grammatically correct. The content of the letter compels an employer to progress this candidate to the next step of the hiring process.	Cover letter uses correct business format with date and addresses at the top, and a signature at the bottom. There are minimal grammar and spelling errors. While the content is decent, this letter does not convince an employer to contact the candidate any further.	Business formatting is not used in this letter. There is no address or date at the top. This letter is not signed. There are multiple grammar and spelling errors. The content of this letter does not make sense to the reader.
SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION	This section identifies the position for which you are applying & explains why you are interested in the job. You have described how you heard about the opening. The wording is creative and hooks the employer to continue reading.	This section identifies the position you are seeking. The letter vaguely describes why you are interested in this job. The letter does not describe how you heard about the opening. The writing may catch an employer's attention, but does not motivate them to continue.	This section does not clearly identify what position you are seeking. There is no description of why you are interested in the position or how you heard about the opening. This letter will not grab an employer's attention to keep them reading.
SECTION 2: IDENTIFY SKILLS & EXPERIENCES RELATED TO THE POSITION	This letter identifies 1-2 of your strongest qualifications and clearly relates how these skills apply to the job at hand. This letter explains specifically why you are interested in the position and this type of job, company, and/or location.	This letter identifies 1 of your qualifications, but it is not clearly related to the position at hand. This letter restates what is on your resume with minimal additional information. You explain why you are interested in the position but are too vague.	This letter does not discuss any relevant qualifications. You have not related your skills to the position for which you are applying. This letter does not state why you are interested in the position, company, and/or location.
SECTION 3: CLOSING	This letter requests the opportunity to interview and thanks the reader for their time. This section describes how you will follow up with the employer in a stated time period.	You thank the reader for taking time to read this letter. You do not request the opportunity to interview. This letter assumes that the employer will contact you to follow up.	This letter does not thank the reader for taking time to review this letter. There is no request to interview. This letter does not mention any plan for follow up.

Template



Career Services <https://uca.edu/career/>

COVER LETTER OUTLINE

Your Name

City, State

Phone number

Email address



Use the same header as on
your resume!

Date

Mr./Ms./Mrs. Employer's First and Last Name, Title Company/Organization

Name

Address

City, State, Zip Code

Dear Mr./Ms./Mrs. Last Name of Employer:

1st paragraph: State your reason for writing and how you found out about the opening.

Ex: *My name is (blank), and I am writing to express my interest in the position of (blank). I became aware of the position opening through (blank).*

You want to prove that you have done some research on the company/organization that the position is affiliated with; perhaps something that attracts you and makes you want to be apart. In other words, why do you want to work for them?

Ex: *In researching this opportunity, I find that you all have (blank).... OR I'm attracted to (blank).*

Then you want to incorporate a transition sentence to end your first paragraph to smoothly move into the second.

Ex: *I strongly believe that my skill set and qualifications would make me an ideal candidate for this opportunity.*

2nd paragraph: You want to provide examples of how the position of interest matches with your education, skills, and experience. **DISCUSS EXPERIENCES FROM YOUR RESUME HERE.** Communicate these experiences as stories or learning experiences rather than just restating the items on your resume. You are trying to prove that you are an ideal candidate as you stated in the conclusion of paragraph 1.

3rd paragraph: In your closing, you want to refer the reader to your resume. Reiterate how you can be contacted. Close with a statement of action, and thank them for their time and consideration.

Ex: *Attached, you will find my resume which provides greater detail of my qualifications. At your earliest convenience, please feel free to contact me by phone or email. I will follow up with you in about a week to check the status of my application. Thank you very much for your time and consideration of candidacy, and I look forward to discussing this opportunity with you further in the near future.*

*****After 'Sincerely,' make sure you hit 'ENTER' about 3 times and then type your name in. Between 'Sincerely' and your typed name, you will need to add your signature. This will require you to add a neat electronic signature OR print out the document, sign it, and scan it back into your computer*****

Adapted from Old Dominion University Career Development Services. (n.d). *Career Development Services: Resumes & job search.* <https://ww1.odu.edu/cds/resume>



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