Writing a Cover Letter

What is a Cover Letter?

- The cover letter is your introduction to the employer and an opportunity to state your interest in the position and the company. It is the chance to reflect your qualifications through relevant and professional and personal stories.
- Think of a cover letter as a marketing tool! You use it to generate interest, convey information not explicitly communicated in your resume and encourage the reader to get excited about your candidacy.

General Tips:

1. **Format It:**
   - Keep it to less than a page – usually 3-4 short paragraphs.
   - Ensure heading, margins, font size and type is the same as your resume. They are a package deal and should mirror each other. Keep paragraphs left justified; utilize returns between paragraphs (Tip: do not indent paragraphs).
   - Always include a cover letter with a resume unless the company says not to include one. The resume and cover letter can be uploaded as one document if necessary.

2. **Customize It:**
   - Always address it to a specific person if you can. To find out the hiring manager's name check LinkedIn, the company website, call the company's human resources office, or network with someone who works at the company. If you cannot find a name, Dear Hiring Manager is sufficient.
   - ALWAYS customize each cover letter to the company AND the position. Share two or three relevant experiences (professional or personal stories reflecting skills sought by the employer) that will make you stand out as a candidate. Incorporate keywords from the job description. Be genuine and reflect your personality.

3. **Go Beyond Resume and Sell Yourself:**
   - Demonstrate your expertise by using industry-specific language.
   - Ensure that the content is engaging and relevant to the hiring manager's needs.
   - Make sure you specify the position to which you are applying and include any information requested, such as a job reference number, and employment availability date.
   - Make sure that the content is unique and is more than copying and pasting your resume in paragraph form.

4. **Edit and Proofread:**
   - Spell check and proofread to avoid all errors.
   - Avoid starting every sentence with "I" or "My".

COVER LETTER OUTLINE

(Make your heading on your cover letter the same as it is on your resume)

Date (that you submit the documents)

Ms./Mr. Employer Name

Title

Company

Mailing Address — Optional

City, State Zip Code

Dear Ms./Mr. or Hiring Manager,

Paragraph 1 – State why you are writing and something specific about the position and company that resonate with you (such as the industry, the company culture, news about the company, how the company or product has been in your life). Name the position to which you are applying. If you learned of this position from a personal contact, it is okay to use their name if you ask permission first. This paragraph will be about 3-4 sentences.

Middle Paragraph 2 – Select two or three of the skills or qualifications the employer seeks most and prove you have them through sharing a couple of professional stories. This will help demonstrate your abilities. Each story should provide situation or context, the action you took, and the result. This paragraph will be the bulk of your cover letter.

Middle Paragraph 3 – Discuss your interest in the organization. Keep in mind the company's mission, values, goals, culture, projects, clients, and recent accolades. Make a connection between you and the company.

Paragraph 4 – Restate your interest in the position and thank the reader for their time. Write a call to action: you can say that you would appreciate the opportunity to interview and learn more about the role and share more of your qualifications. Include your contact information (phone and email) again. If you plan to follow up on the status of your application in two weeks, say so and be sure that you do follow up. This will be a short paragraph. End with appreciation.

Sincerely, *(Quadruple space)*

(Your Signature, black ink or scan with a computer)

Type your name