



Guide to Cover Letters

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Cover Lettersp. 2
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MU Career Center's Guide to Cover Letters: Part of the Job Search Preparation Guide Series

Job Search Preparation Guide Series:

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**MU Career Center
Guide Series:**
*Career and Major Exploration
Job Search Preparation
After College Planning
Diversity*

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Cover Letters

PURPOSE

To tell the employer what type of position you are seeking and provide your resume objective.

To entice the employer to learn more about you by reading your resume.

To impress the employer by showcasing your knowledge about the company and/or its goals.

To show the employer how well you can express yourself.

GETTING STARTED

Address the letter to a specific individual

Call to request the name and title of the person responsible for hiring college graduates in your career areas. “Dear Sir or Madam” is no longer considered proper in professional correspondence. Some people are offended by being called “Madam.” Contemporary literature suggests deleting the salutation when you do not know whom you are addressing. You may direct the letter to someone with a specific job title, such as Director of Editorial Services, or simply begin the letter without a salutation.

Write an attention-getting introduction

Remember, you are trying to entice the reader to want to get to know you better, and ultimately hire you.

State the position for which you are applying and point out your relevant qualifications

Do not merely repeat the contents of your resume. Select specific experiences relevant to the job and discuss them. Fill in the blanks your resume leaves open. Tell the employer why you are uniquely suited for the job. Avoid using “I” to start every sentence.

Tailor your letters to the needs of the company and requirements of the position

How will *the employer* benefit by hiring you? Want ads and company publications offer clues about what to stress. Get inside information about the workings of your chosen industry and let them know that you are aware of — and possess — exactly what it is that they are looking for.

Inform employers of your intention to contact them within a specific period of time (*such as a week, 10 days, two weeks*)

Then, be sure to carry out the follow-up action you mention. It’s a good idea to tell the employer how to reach you during business hours.

Match your stationery and resume in size, weight, and shade without exceeding one page

You are trying to get their attention in an organized and concise manner.

Don’t forget to sound positive and confident!

THE STRUCTURE OF THE COVER LETTER

Date

Your Street Address
City, State Zip Code

(Space down four spaces)

Mr./Ms. Recruiter's Full Name
Recruiter's Title
Department Name
Company Name
Street Address
City, State Zip Code

Dear Mr./Ms. Last Name Only,

The opening paragraph should state **why you are writing** and why you are interested in the organization. If you are writing a letter of application, you should name the specific position for which you are applying. Also, tell the employer how you became aware of the vacancy. If a former employer or someone else referred you to the employer, this is the best place to drop that person's name and mention that he or she suggested you write. A letter of inquiry should provide evidence of your career-mindedness; it helps to refer to specific job functions, if not titles, when trying to determine if a vacancy exists.

The second paragraph is where you draw attention to your resume and highlight specific skills relevant to the potential employer. This paragraph is devoted to explaining **how you are qualified**. Cite achievements and qualifications related to the position desired. If you have qualifications that are not noted on your resume, this is your opportunity to discuss them.

The third paragraph states **why you are right for this job**. Use this paragraph to demonstrate your knowledge of the employer and their goals. Tell them why you should be considered for the position you are applying for. A little bit of homework on the company or the industry can really pay off by showing the employer that you are serious about your application, and informed about the type of work and experience that it requires.

The closing paragraph states **what you will do next** (such as calling to arrange an appointment at the employer's convenience) or what you would like the recipient of the letter to do next. Request action. Ask for an interview. Inform the employer when you will make contact with them again if appropriate. Either here, or in your closing, thank the employer for their time. Restate your phone number and e-mail address in case this becomes separated from your resume.

Sincerely,

Your Signature Here

Your Name Typed

Enclosure(s) *(This indicates that your resume and/or additional materials are enclosed.)*

SAMPLE COVER LETTER

August 9, 2005

9781 College
Columbia, Missouri 65203

Ms. Lauren Liu
Managing Editor
Amazon.com
P.O. Box 6898
Seattle, Washington 98961

Dear Ms. Liu,

While researching publishing companies online, I discovered an opening on your firm's website in the editorial department as a category writer. I would like to be considered for this position at the company headquarters in Seattle. This May, I will graduate from the University of Missouri with a degree in journalism in the magazine sequence, and I would like to use the knowledge, skills and experience that I have gained to pioneer Internet businesses like yours.

I have had extensive experience in feature writing at newspapers and magazines, along with writing creatively in the corporate world. However, my true interest lies in new media and how to merge innovative writing with cutting-edge technology. For the past year, I have been an on-line editor for the *Hate Report*, a report on the state of inequality at the University of Missouri. In addition to my on-line experience, I have worked as a reporter for the health, science and environment beat for the *Columbia Missourian* and as a features editor for *Vox* magazine. I have also had experience as a copyeditor for *Vox* and the *Hate Report*. I am confident, because of these experiences, that I could bring creativity, grace-under-pressure, and style to the job.

I understand that Amazon.com has been on the forefront of technology since it's beginning in 1995. With my flair for the creative and my ability to reach a rainbow of readers, I believe that I am well-suited to help your company expand well into the millennium. Your mission to transform internet buying into the fastest, easiest, and most enjoyable experience possible is one that I could aid substantially with not only my writing experience, but also my dream for the same.

More importantly, though, I know a letter and resume can only tell you so much about my motivations and qualifications. I would like to discuss my background with you in person and would be willing to travel to Seattle at my own expense to do so. I will call you at the end of next week to discuss whether such a meeting would be possible and to confirm that you have received my resume and writing samples. Please feel free to contact me at harper@harper.com or (123) 456-7890.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Harper Scott

Enclosure