

Cover Letters



Student Career Centre

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Writing Cover Letters

Having a great cover letter is your first step in getting hired. It is the initial evaluation of your skills, your resume, and you as a worker and as a person.

What is a cover letter?

Cover letters are simply a letter of introduction. In these letters you are explaining who you are and why you are writing to the resume reader. It is a matter of courtesy that you introduce yourself when you are requesting something of them, in this case an interview.

Why is a cover letter important?

A resume is useless to an employer if he or she doesn't know what kind of work you want to do. A cover letter tells the employer the type of position you're seeking and exactly how you are qualified for that position.

A cover letter highlights the aspects of your experience that are most useful to the potential employer, and you can earn points for knowing what those aspects are. Employers get hundreds of resumes, especially when they advertise a choice position. Your cover letter can call attention to the skills, talents and experience the employer is looking for.

Components of a cover letter

Contact information

- Include your name, address, telephone and email. Keep the format of this section consistent with your resume.

Employers Information

- Include name of contact person, job title, name of company, address and postal code. Whenever possible, try doing some research to obtain this information if you do not possess it (e.g. telephone the company).

Salutation

- Start your salutation with "Dear" or address the contact person by their last name starting with "Mr." or "Ms" depending on the gender.

Opening paragraph – Why are you writing?

- Open with strong sentences that grab the employer's attention. Demonstrate knowledge of the position by addressing why you are interested in this position and mention two or three strengths that qualify you for the position.
- Mention the position you are applying for and how you found out about it.

Second paragraph – What do you have to offer?

- Informs the employer why you're an ideal match for the job.
- Use specific examples of accomplishments, skills, or traits that you possess that show off your strengths.
- Target your strengths to the needs and requirements identified for the position.
- Can also point form sentences that are in bullet style.

Closing paragraph – Your goodbye

- Mention your interest in a personal interview or to discuss opportunities.
- Mention that our qualifications and skills will make a positive contribution to the organization.
- Provide information on your availability and how the employer may contact you.
- Always thank the employer for their time and consideration in advance.

Cover letter Do's and Don'ts

In a job market, neglecting your cover letter is a big mistake. Like any other important job searching tool, there are definite do's and don'ts to follow to make sure that your cover letter is an asset.

Do's

- ***Do personalize your letter.*** Address your cover letter to a named candidate.
- ***Do speak to the requirements of the job,*** especially when responding to an ad.
- ***Do keep your cover letter brief.*** Each paragraph should have no more than two to three sentences.
- ***Do tell the employer how you can meet their needs and contribute to the company.***
- ***Do personally sign the cover letter.***
- ***Do proofread and edit your letter with great care.*** The cover letter should have no typos or spelling mistakes.

Don'ts

- ***Don't repeat your resume.*** Use the cover letter to highlight aspects of your resume.
- ***Don't send a generic cover letter to many different companies.*** Each cover letter should be unique and target to the position applied for.
- ***Don't depend on the employer to take action.*** Request action. Request a personal interview and tell the employer when you will follow-up to arrange it.
- ***Don't use flashy stationery,*** unless you're applying for a highly creative job.
- ***Don't sell yourself short.*** Try not to be modest about your accomplishments.
- ***Don't handwrite a cover letter,*** unless asked to.

Goals of the cover letter

To be most effective, your cover letter must do 5 things:

1. Grab the employer's attention and keep it.
2. Appeal to the employer's interests and needs.
3. Highlight your skills, experiences, and accomplishments.
4. Provide information that is relevant to the job.
5. Convince the employer that you should be interviewed.

***If you are searching for a job,
you need a great cover letter to go with your resume!***

Cover Letter Template - Handout

Date – Canadian Format (January 19, 2010)

(Mrs. Ms. Mr.) Person's Full Name
Job Title/Position (if it's available)
Agency, Company or Organization Name
Street Address of the Company
City, Province Postal Code

Re: (Advertised position and competition number)

Dear Mr./Ms./Mrs. (Last name of above): OR Dear Sir or Madam:

The first paragraph is the most important – This is the opportunity to introduce yourself and the position you are applying for. Make sure it is clear right away what position you are applying for. It demonstrates to employers that you have done research and you really want to work for this organization.

Second paragraph is your relevant experience for the position you are applying for. - Focus on your skills, experience, talents, accomplishments and values. Make sure you highlight the skills you have as they refer to the job advertisement. You do not need to include all your skills and experience. Target your skills that they are looking for.

Third paragraph why you believe you will be an asset to the organization – Think about how you can contribute to this company. Why you think you would fit into the company. Focus on your strengths and values.

Fourth paragraph Thank you for your time and consideration – How they can contact you. Make sure you list the various methods of contacting you.

Sincerely,

Your Name

Your Address
Prince George, BC
Postal Code

Encl.

John Smith
3333 University Way
Prince George, BC V2N 4Z9
Tel: (250) 999-9999
Email: johnsmith@unbc.ca

July 30, 2009

Lucille Craft
Account Director
Joyhut Advertising
1264 Media Avenue
Prince George, BC V1J 8H2

Re: Human Resources Assistant

Dear Ms. Craft,

As a new graduate from the University of Northern British Columbia with a major in Human Resources Management I am excited to apply for the Human Resources Assistant position with X Company. This position is of great interest to me as I have a strong interest in enhancing my career with your organization and becoming a part of your team.

My education has given me a strong foundation in Human Resources Management and the importance on employment relationships. In order to contribute to the success of an organization, I understand the value of providing a safe workplace, selecting and recruiting the right candidates, and developing training programs to enhance employees' knowledge. Currently, I am a member of the BC Human Resources Management Association and I am in the process of writing the CHRP designation.

In addition, my education has given me the opportunity to work effectively in team settings, give oral and written presentations as well as accomplish time specific goals on a regular basis. Being part of clubs I have developed interpersonal and leadership skills as they are essential in communicating with individuals. I am a dedicated individual who works hard and I have the ability to multi task and provide excellent customer service. Further, I have used a variety of computer software such as Microsoft word, power point, and excel.

I would appreciate a personal interview to discuss my qualifications further and how I can contribute my skills and knowledge to X Company. I can be reached by email at johnsmith@unbc.ca or by phone 250-999-9999.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

John Smith

John Smith

3333 University Way
Prince George, BC, V2N 4Z9
Tel: (250) 999-9999
Email: johnsmith@unbc.ca

April 28, 2010

Lucille Craft, Account Director
Joyhut Advertising
1264 Media Avenue
Prince George, BC V1J 8H2

Re: Job Title , Comp# ROL00538-9

Dear Ms. Craft,

I would like to express my interest in the Coordinator position advertised on the Student Career Centre website. The opportunity presented with X Company is very appealing to me and I strongly believe that I have the skills, and qualifications for this position.

As a third year student in the computer science program, I have learned about computer software and the impact it has in an organization. Through my program I had the opportunity to:

- Register students for courses and manage program software to track progress
- Problem solve by analyzing the situation and identifying the issue
- Answer customers questions and guide them through the process
- Enforce department policies and serve as a contact person for students, faculty, and staff
- Schedule and manage staff, supply inventory, as well as order the appropriate parts for computers
- Excellent interpersonal and communication skills by working with students and faculty in designing web database and spreadsheets

My team skills have been developed through five years experience on the Prince George Rep Hockey team where I was a contributing team member and the team captain for my bantam year. In addition, many class projects have been completed in teams where everyone had to work together in order to achieve a common goal and succeed successfully.

I would appreciate a personal interview to discuss my qualifications further and how I can contribute my skills and knowledge to X Company. I can be reached by email at johnsmith@unbc.ca or by phone 250-999-9999. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

John Smith