

# COVER LETTER WRITING GUIDE

The University of Akron



The University of Akron  
**Career Center**

Student Union 211  
(330) 972-7747  
<http://www.uakron.edu/career>

## Connecting You to Your Career Success

The University of Akron is an equal education and employment institution

# COVER LETTERS: WHAT ARE THEY?

When you apply for a job, or any time you send your resume to someone, you typically will include a cover letter with your resume. Your cover letter is your opportunity to establish a positive first impression and professional rapport with a potential employer.

## WHAT IS INCLUDED IN A COVER LETTER?

*Cover letters should be no longer than one page, with a max of three or four paragraphs. Each paragraph serves a unique purpose:*

### **Paragraph One (Introduction):**

Two or three sentences describing who you are, what position you are applying for, where/when you heard about the position, and why you are applying for that position with that organization.

### **Paragraph Two (Body):**

Three to five sentences showcasing how you are a good “fit” for the position and the organization. Look at the position advertisement and/or position description, and highlight how your skills, experiences and education will help that organization achieve their goals. Specific examples, facts, and figures can often best demonstrate your career story in a memorable way.

### **Paragraph Three (Conclusion):**

Two to three sentences conveying an action step (e.g., “I will contact you next week to follow up with my application”), and/or how to best reach you (phone number and times to call). Close with a strong positive statement.

## *Here are some important points to remember when you are creating your cover letter:*

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Use standard business letter format.

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Write clearly and concisely, using grammatically correct sentences.

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Avoid jargon, slang, contractions (I’m, don’t, isn’t), and spelling errors.

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Honestly convey your strengths and the key skills (communication, honesty, teamwork, interpersonal skills, strong work ethic, etc.) that employers desire in their employees.

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Clearly convey your enthusiasm for this career opportunity.

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Address your cover letter to a specific individual whenever possible.

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Write a letter that expands upon and adds to your resume, without repeating your resume.

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Write in your own voice, and do not try to sound like someone you are not.

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Avoid using cover letters copied from other sources.

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Demonstrate you have done your research about the organization and how you can help them meet their goals.

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Tailor each cover letter for each job application.

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After reading your cover letter, a potential employer should have a good sense of your personality and “fit” for the job at their organization.

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When sending a hard copy, sign every one of your cover letters in blue or black ink (do not use photocopies with a signature).

# SIMPLE RULES FOR A GOOD COVER LETTER

- Font:* Use the same 10-12 point font you used for your resume (simple, readable font style such as Arial, Tahoma, Times New Roman, or Verdana).
- Margins:* Set your page margins between .5 – 1.0 inch, and make them equal on all four sides.
- Length:* One page.
- Paper:* When sending your cover letter by hardcopy, use good quality resume paper in a neutral (white, beige, ivory, light grey) shade. Consider also buying matching envelopes, so you can use the same paper for your resume and thank you letters.
- E-mail:* If you are applying by E-mail, cut and paste your cover letter into the body of your E-mail. Double-check that your spacing and fonts look professional.
- Printer:* Use a laser quality printer, whenever possible.

## **Letter Writing 101**

**Draft #1:** Just write it. For the first draft of your cover letter, do not worry about getting the wording right the first time, just get your thoughts on paper. Compare the job description and requirements with your resume and cover letter; are you clearly conveying how you meet their needs?

**Draft #2:** Get your letter to one page. Clearly convey what makes you the best candidate for that job and that organization. Be consistent in your style and writing throughout your cover letter. Create a concisely written letter that is visually appealing, with strong content that conveys your professionalism. Have someone critique your cover letter.

## **Free Cover Letter Critiques!**

The Career Center staff will critique your cover letter for free. Simply...

Call 330-972-7747 to make an appointment to meet with a career advisor.

**OR**

Stop by our office in Student Union 211 for a quick (10 minute) critique of your cover letter. Walk-in hours are available. Please check our website for current hours

(<http://www.uakron.edu/career>)

Faculty within your career field, professionals, and family can also be extremely helpful in providing cover letter critiques.

## **Is it Done Yet?**

After you receive feedback on your cover letter, you will pull together at least one more draft, and then your cover letter should be ready to send out to employers. Once you have a good working cover letter, you can then tailor it for every position to which you are applying. Be sure to read each letter carefully; you want to avoid sending a Letter to Mrs. Jones addressed “Dear Mr. Smith.”

## **Ready for the Interview?**

If the employer who reads your cover letter and resume thinks you would be an asset to their organization, you will be contacted for an interview. For more information on interviewing and your job search, contact the Career Center; be sure to ask about our free mock interview service.

# EXAMPLE TEMPLATE OF A COVER LETTER

Today's Date

Your Current Address

City, State, Zip Code

Person to whom this letter is being sent (whenever possible, address it to an individual)

Title

Organization or Company Name

Street Address

City, State, Zip

E-mail address (only if E-mailing your cover letter)

Dear Mr., Miss, Mrs., Ms., Dr. (insert last name here)

Or if name is unknown, address to Dear Sir or Madam (avoid using "To Whom It May Concern").

Indicate the reason for writing, the specific position for which you are applying, how you learned about the position (name and date of publication, Career Center, or contact person), and explain why you are applying (what qualifies you for this position?). If you are sending a letter of inquiry (job openings are currently listed with that organization) indicate your interest in working for their company/organization. Focus on what you can do for them, not what they can do for you.

Sell yourself as the best candidate for this position with this organization/company. Relate your academic coursework, work or internship experiences, leadership or organization experiences, and your strengths. Potential employers are most interested in your unique characteristics, your achievements, how you match up with the position description, and how you can help their organization achieve their goals. Write this paragraph so it does not repeat what is on your resume, but adds more information. Mention that you have enclosed your resume.

Let the employer know you are enthusiastic about the possibility of working with their organization. Include your phone number and E-mail. Add an action statement for following up with your resume, only if you will follow through (saying you will, and not doing so, will most likely cut you from consideration). Thank the employer for their time and finish with a strong positive statement.

Sincerely,

(sign your name here in black or blue ink)

Your Typed Name

P.S.: A Post Script can be an effective way to emphasize a key skill or experience that is directly related to that job or company.

Enclosure: resume

## COVER LETTER EXAMPLE #1: TRADITIONAL FORMAT

12 Exchange Street  
Akron, Ohio 44303  
September 23, 2013

Amy Temple  
Personnel Director  
Stark County Department of Job and Family Services  
220 East Tuscarawas Street  
Canton, Ohio 44702

Dear Ms. Temple,

I am excited about the opportunity to work as a programmer for the Stark County Department of Job and Family Services. My advisor, Dr. William Gates, told me about the Programmer position opening. I also saw the position posted with The University of Akron's Career Center on September 21, 2013.

Your position advertisement asks for a candidate with a Bachelor's degree in Computer Science and knowledge of database programs. I will be graduating in December 2012 with my Bachelor of Science in Computer Science. Through my coursework, I have received broad exposure to the programming languages of SQL, and other database tools such as MS Access, MySQL, AbriaLite, and Excel. During the summer of 2010, I worked as an intern for the United Way of Summit County, helping to create a donor database that can easily be searched for specific fund raising purposes. Although I may lack the 3-5 years experience you prefer for a candidate, I have the skills, energy, work ethic, and ability to learn quickly that would make me a perfect match for this position. You should also know that I have chosen to focus my career in working with improving technology within the non-profit sector. While working at the United Way, I found it very rewarding to see how increasing technological effectiveness directly led to improved services to those in need.

Enclosed please find my resume. I will contact you next week to inquire about the possibility of an interview. Please feel free to contact me at 330-555-JANE (555-5263) or [jgrove@uakron.edu](mailto:jgrove@uakron.edu). Thank you for your time and consideration. I look forward to the possibility of being part of the Stark County Department of Job and Family Services team.

Sincerely,

*Jane Grove*

Jane Grove

# COVER LETTER EXAMPLE #3: BULLET ITEM FORMAT

**Pat T. Bounay**

1515 Farmer Parkway

Akron, Ohio 44326 330/227-7687

carrots@aol.com

May 7, 2012

Dr. Martha Mindell  
Superintendent  
Las Vegas Schools  
123 Casino Road  
Las Vegas, Nevada 01934

Dear Dr. Mindell:

After a successful career in business, I recently fulfilled a lifelong desire to become an educator at the secondary level. I completed my secondary education licensure requirements in language arts, and am also certified to be a soccer and baseball coach. I am excited to begin my teaching career. This letter is being sent to inquire about possible teaching opportunities within the Las Vegas School system. The enclosed resume will provide detailed information regarding my background and experience.

To briefly highlight my qualifications, I would bring to the classroom the following:

- Successful classroom teaching experiences, gaining the highest possible rating from all observers.
- More than 10 years instructing youth as volunteer coach for soccer, baseball, little league, and T-ball.
- Creative use of technology to engage young minds in learning.
- The ability to be an outstanding role model and mentor for students.

I would bring a unique perspective to the classroom and a total commitment to helping students learn. Should you have a teaching position available, I would enjoy talking with you about that opportunity. I will contact you at the end of your school year to further discuss any employment opportunities.

Thank you for your time and consideration, and good luck with the closing of this busy academic year.

Sincerely,

*Pat T. Bounay*

Pat T. Bounay

Enclosure: Resume