

COVER LETTER GUIDE

NJCU Center for Career & Professional Development

WHAT IS A COVER LETTER?

- One page document that accompanies your resume that provides additional information about your skills and past experiences related to the job you're applying for
- Written to the person or organization offering the position for which you are applying
- Shows employer who you are, why you are interested in the role and the company/organization, and why you are a good fit
- Elaborates further on the skills explained in your resume with specific examples
- Tailored and written for the specific role you are applying for
- The Cover letter should show that:
 - You are qualified for the role
 - You would do the job well
 - You would make a good fit at the company/organization
- Your cover letter expands upon your resume - it is NOT your resume repeated in paragraph format

FORMAT/CONTENT OF A COVER LETTER

- A cover letter is three to four paragraphs. One page documents only - no exceptions!
- Use a clean format and font that matches your resume
- Do not use templates from the internet with colors or graphics
- Use the active voice and keep the tone positive and professional
- Spelling errors are not acceptable—be sure to proofread your cover letter to make sure that the grammar, sentence structure, and spelling are perfect
- Tailor your cover letter to the specific job and the company/organization:
 - Develop a habit of writing a new cover letter for each opportunity you apply for
 - Employers will know if you use the same cover letter for every application and just change the job title and company name throughout
 - Use keywords from the job description—if the employer states they are looking for specific skills or use a specific adjective in the job description, use those words (while staying truthful)
- How to stand out:
 - Use numbers and statistics that you can back up where applicable
 - Provide correlating examples or experiences that back up the skills you mention
 - Although a cover letter is not required for every job application, it is beneficial to submit one when it is optional—the extra effort shows the employer that you're serious about the job and it differentiates you from other candidates

PREPARING TO WRITE THE COVER LETTER

Know the Company, Know the Job, and Know Yourself!

1. **Know the Company:** Research the Employer
 - Learn enough about the organization so that you can articulate why you are a strong fit for the company/organization
 - Review the website, read articles, review the company LinkedIn profile and posts
 - If possible, speak with current or previous employers
2. **Know the Job:** Analyze the Job Description

- Look for skills, duties, and qualifications of the job so you can design your letter to prove you match these as much as possible
3. **Know Yourself:** Reflect on your Background
- Ask yourself what you have done that is similar to the duties required of the job, including classes, projects, work experiences, internships, volunteer, activities, travel, etc. (transferrable skills)

WHAT TO INCLUDE IN YOUR COVER LETTER

See page 4 for a sample cover letter with each of these sections

1. Header/Contact Section

- Include your personal contact details: name, email address, and phone number
- Make sure your contact information is consistent across your resume and cover letter
- Use same contact header format as your resume to keep both documents uniform

2. Date

- The date you are submitting the cover letter

3. Employer Address

- Be specific - find the employer's address on Google if you don't see it on the job posting

4. Salutation/Proper Greeting

- If possible, address the name of the hiring manager or the company:
 - "Dear Mr./Ms/Dr. Last Name"
 - If you do not know the gender of your contact, you can write out the person's full name ("Dear Cory Smith")
 - If you do not have a contact name, you can write "Dear Hiring Manager"
- Sample greetings include but are not limited to:
 - Dear Ms./Mrs./Mr./Dr. _____, (i.e. Dear Ms. Jones)
 - Dear Hiring Manager,
 - Dear [XYZ Company] Team,
- Do NOT use "To Whom It May Concern"

5. First Paragraph

- These few sentences at the beginning of your cover letter will determine whether the hiring manager will continue reading. Make your cover letter introduction attract and hold the hiring manager's interest by expressing your interest for the role and providing specific examples of how you can help or contribute within the role at the company. This opening paragraph should be reflective of your personality while staying professional.
 - Include why you are writing
 - Mention the position you are applying for and how you learned about it (where you found job listing)
 - If you have the name of a mutual contact, you can mention that
 - Include why you want to work for the specific position and the specific company/organization

6. Middle Paragraphs

- Explain Why You're the Perfect Candidate
 - Relate your past or current experiences and skills with what they are looking for in the job you're applying for. You do not have need to done the exact job you're applying for—you just need to communicate how your skills and past experiences can help you succeed in the job you're applying for. Show that you're going to satisfy the company's specific needs by using

language from the job description. Show that you possess the skills they're looking for with examples of your past experiences to back it up.

1. Use this section as a pitch for your fit as an employee and show what makes you a great candidate
2. Describe what you have to offer the employer - what can you bring to the job?
3. Make strong connections between your abilities and the employer's needs (transferable skills)
4. Mention specifically how your qualifications match the job you are applying for with specific examples from the roles mentioned on your resume
5. Quantify achievements with percentages, numbers, or dollar figures when you can

b. Explain Why You're Eager to Join

- i. Along with needing you to be able to do the job duties well, the employer wants you to enjoy the job and working with them. If they know you'd enjoy the job, they figure you are more likely to stay with them for a longer period.
- ii. To express your enthusiasm for the job/company, you can:
 1. Discuss one or more of the job responsibilities and why they would be fulfilling for you
 2. Explain why the company's mission or purpose is important to you
 3. Mention a fact about the company (upcoming project, recent award, new initiative) and why you find it interesting
 4. Reiterate that your experience and knowledge will let you succeed in the role

7. Closing Paragraphs

- a. Briefly reiterate main points made throughout resume
- b. State how the reader can contact you (phone number and email)
- c. Thank the reader for their time and consideration

8. Complimentary Close

- a. Once you've written the body of your cover letter, you just need to put a formal closing at the very end. Write "Sincerely," and follow it with your full name. Adding your handwritten (or digital) signature is optional, but it's recommended for more formal cover letters. Remember to focus on what you have to offer to the job versus needing the job. Sample sign offs include but are not limited to:
 - i. Sincerely,
 - ii. Thank you,
 - iii. With best regards,
 - iv. Thank you for your consideration,
 - v. Truly yours,
 - vi. Respectfully yours,

SAMPLE COVER LETTER

See pages 2-3 for information about each numbered section

1

YOUR NAME

City, State, Zip Code | Phone Number | Email Address | LinkedIn (if it's done!)

2

February 9, 2024

3

Dr. Evelyn Morales
Research Manager
NovaTech Labs
123 Science Avenue
Newark, NJ 07102

4

Dear Dr. Morales,

5

As a dedicated undergraduate biology major with a passion for clinical research and a strong foundation in biological sciences, I am excited to apply for the Clinical Research Associate position at NovaTech Labs. With rigorous coursework in molecular biology, genetics, and biochemistry complemented by hands-on experience in laboratory settings and a proactive role in academic and extracurricular research activities, I am eager to contribute NovaTech Lab's pursuit of advancing scientific knowledge and innovation in clinical research.

6

In addition to my required coursework as undergraduate biology major at New Jersey City University, I volunteered as a lab assistant at my university's Clinical Genetics research facility where I had the privilege to work on research focused on the impact of genomics and pharmacogenomics on healthcare. Through this research experience, I had the opportunity to present to 300 of my peers as well as faculty from various institutions at the annual North Jersey Emerging Research Scholars Symposium.

7

I am also the Secretary for the Biology Club at New Jersey City University, which has provided me with leadership experience and the opportunity to deepen my understanding of scientific concepts through club events and meetings. During the Fall 2023 semester, the club organized a student research presentation day, where I oversaw event planning, including reserving the space, ordering catering, creating and sending invitations, and assembling the program. My experience as Secretary for the Biology Club has equipped me with teamwork, organizational, and time management skills which I believe would be beneficial in the Clinical Research Associate role.

The opportunity to apply for the Clinical Research Associate role excites me because the prestigious reputation of NovaTech Labs in the field of clinical genetics. The developments the company has made along with the dedication to improving the lives of people diagnosed with inherited conditions is truly incredible and perfectly reflects my own passion for this field of research.

You may reach me at 555-555-5555 or professionalemail@email.com. Thank you for your time and consideration and I look forward to hearing from you.

8

Sincerely,

Jane Smith

If you need some inspiration for writing your own cover letter, you can:

- View the NJCU Cover Letter Templates (see Center for Career and Professional Development website)
- Visit <https://www.livecareer.com/cover-letter/examples> and scroll down to the “Cover letter examples by category and job title” (use this source for inspiration for the body paragraphs content and NOT the format of the cover letter—see NJCU Center for Career & Professional Development templates for the formatting)

SAVING YOUR COVER LETTER

- Save your cover letter file name as “Firstname Lastname Cover Letter” (i.e. John Smith Cover Letter)
- Save and submit the file as a PDF unless the application states otherwise

NEXT STEPS: COVER LETTER REVIEW

Reviewing Your Cover Letter – Cover Letter Checklist

Congrats! You drafted a cover letter. Before submitting it for an application, please make sure it meets these criteria:

- Includes sections 1-8 explained above
- Professional heading matches your resume (your name/contact info on the top)
- Cover letter is one page (not two)
- Only black font
- Font type is the same throughout (i.e. Arial, Times New Roman, etc.)
- Proofread for grammatical errors
- Cover letter is *written specifically for the specific job* it is for (not just a vague cover letter where you can plug in the company name/role)

SUBMITTING YOUR COVER LETTER

Follow the Employer’s Instructions!

- **The employer may require you to submit the cover letter by:**
 - Uploading your resume/cover letter/other documents through an online application form
- OR
- Sending your resume/cover letter/other documents as attachments to an email address

WHEN APPLYING VIA EMAIL

See page 6 for a sample application by email

- **Subject Line:**
 - If you don't include one, your message might not even be opened.
 - Explain to the reader who you are and what job you are applying for.
 - If employer doesn't specify what subject line to use, make it: “Your Name - Job Title Application” (i.e. “John Smith - Digital Marketing Internship Application”)
- **Write an Email Message:**
 - The email message is separate from your cover letter.
 - Your email message can be brief and state that your resume and cover letter are attached.
 - Offer to provide additional information and let the reader know how you can be contacted.
 - Add an email signature & include link to your LinkedIn profile
- **Make sure files are attached before pressing send:**
 - Resume
 - Cover Letter
 - Other documents they specifically asked for (references, transcript, etc.)

Applying by Email - Email Message Sample:

Subject: John Smith - Digital Marketing Internship Application

Dear Ms. Williams,

I'm writing to apply for the Summer Marketing Internship at Stellar Marketing Solutions.

I have extensive digital marketing experience as a student content creator for the Office of Admissions at my university. Additionally, I serve as the Public Relations Chair for the Alpha Beta Gamma Honor Society for Business, where I have created various campaigns on social media platforms to encourage students to apply. As someone passionate about compelling storytelling and experienced in creating content on digital platforms, I am very excited to apply for the Summer Marketing Internship at Stellar Marketing Solutions.

I've attached my cover letter and resume for your review. If there's any additional information you need, please let me know.

Thank you very much for your consideration.

Best regards,

John Smith
email@email.com
555-555-555

SOURCES

Program Booklet for NJCU's EOF & ASCEND Opportunity Scholarship Program Virtual Career Conference 2022

<https://www.livecareer.com/cover-letter/examples>

<https://studentaffairs.baruch.cuny.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/6/2020/04/Resume-and-Cover-Letter-Guide.pdf>

<https://www.thebalancecareers.com/cover-letter-format-2060205>

<https://www.thebalancecareers.com/cover-letter-template-2060213>

<https://www.thebalancecareers.com/student-cover-letter-samples-2063664>

<https://www.thebalancecareers.com/how-to-send-a-resume-and-cover-letter-attachment-2061596>

<https://www.thebalancecareers.com/how-to-address-a-cover-letter-2060281>

<https://www.thebalancecareers.com/write-a-cover-letter-in-5-easy-steps-2060709>