Cover letter tips

Cover letter structure

HEADING, DATE, INSIDE ADDRESS, AND SALUTATION

- Ensure that you have a consistent heading on both your cover letter and resumé by using your header from your resumé spaced and centered across the top of your page:
  - Your mobile number
  - Your Northeastern email address
  - Your LinkedIn URL
- Add the date you are writing the letter
- Input the inside address: Contact's full Name and Title, Company and Address, including the street number and name, city, state and zip code
- Use a salutation, "Dear Mr./Ms. Last Name,"
  - Whenever possible address the cover letter to a specific individual (if corporate residency, Graduate Career Center will provide).
  - **Do:** "Dear Mr. Smith" (for a woman, Ms.). Make every attempt to use the correct honorific such as Dr. or Prof.
  - **Don't:** "Dear Bob Smith" or "Dear Bob"
  - When you cannot address the cover letter to a specific individual, use "Dear Hiring Manager"

PARAGRAPH ONE – THE PURPOSE

- Clearly state why you are writing, name the position that appeals to you, and how you learned about it
- Indicate why you are interested in this particular company and position, showing basic knowledge about the company (use your research)
- Lay groundwork of what makes you a strong candidate (focus on meeting their needs, not yours)
- If you recently met someone from the company, make reference here to the name of the person you met and how you met them, but only if that person would remember meeting you

PARAGRAPH TWO – THE SALE

- Here, you'll emphasize why you'd be valuable to the company. In other words, what's in it for them? Making it all about you is one of the biggest mistakes you can make!
- Include work experience related to the job for which you are applying (if necessary, support with academic experience)
- Demonstrate your worth to the organization
- Highlight transferrable skills and experience
- Incorporate examples of accomplishments as your proof statements (without repeating exactly what is on your resumé)

PARAGRAPH THREE – THE CLOSE

- Thank the reader for their time and consideration
- Restate your interest in the position
- Suggest next steps
- Provide your contact information

Alternative openings for cover letters

- "Your posting for a fixed income product management corporate residency captured my attention, and I believe I'm a great candidate due to my analytical, quantitative and project management skills."
- "With a proven record of success in marketing, I am eager to apply for your brand marketing corporate residency posted on the Global Talent System (GTS)."
- "While attending a recent lunch with [employee's name], I learned about XYZ Company's commitment to sustainability. With experience and academic training in sustainable supply chain management, it is with great enthusiasm that I apply for the supply chain analyst position corporate residency."

Resources for writing business letters and cover letters

- For any additional assistance refer to online sources such as LinkedIn, The Muse, Fast Company, and GTS resources. We recommend that if you are referencing a book, to look for a publishing date after 2013, anything before that may have outdated information.
- **The Writing Center at Northeastern University**
  - **Office in Holmes**
    412 Holmes Hall
    617-373-4549
  - **Snell Library Location**
    136 Snell Library
    617-373-2086
  - Visit: www.northeastern.edu/writingcenter
- **Global Student Success Resources/International Tutoring Center**
  - Visit: **neu.mywconline.net**

COVER LETTER TIPS

Dos

- Send a customized letter to each employer
- Address your letter to a specific individual
- Use the same font and header information on your resumé and cover letter for a uniform and professional look
- Make the most of your opening paragraph–get their attention with specific information on what makes you a great candidate for the job
- Project confidence
- Use simple language and uncomplicated sentence structure
- Eliminate all unnecessary words
- Keep it to one page with standard margins
- Avoid starting each sentence with "I"
- Avoid the use of too many "I/me/my"; focus on the employer–"you, your company, your needs"
- Keep your letter to no more than four paragraphs
- Focus on how the organization can benefit from your skills and experiences
- Link the needs and requirements to your knowledge, skills and experience
- Use key terms from the job description
- Proofread it yourself and have someone else look at it

Don'ts

- Send your letter to "To Whom it May Concern"
- Send a generic or template letter
- Underestimate yourself
- Be negative
- Include examples of experiences that are not related to the position
- Send your resumé without a customized cover letter
- Send a cover letter that contains typos, misspellings, incorrect grammar or punctuation
- Simply repeat what your resumé says
- Use instant messaging terms or emoticons
- Exceed one page
- Overuse "I/me/my"
- Focus only on how you will benefit

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