

COVER LETTERS

Please note that because employers vary so greatly in their opinions of and uses for cover letters, the Career Center considers research and employer feedback, and bases its advice on what approaches are most likely to be effective in a variety of situations you may encounter. Always research the organizations you're applying to and find out as much as you can about how they use cover letters and what they like to see in them.

What is a cover letter? Written in business letter format, a cover letter is a letter you write to a prospective employer when applying for a job. You may sometimes see it called other names, such as a letter of interest or application letter.

Again, how different employers use cover letters varies, but in the most common situation, your cover letter will be read AFTER they've read your resume, and only IF your resume convinced them you were qualified enough that they want to learn more. Therefore, your cover letter should *supplement* the information on your resume. When writing your letter, ask yourself, "If the employer had already read my resume, would this letter add additional value to my application?"

An effective letter should convince the employer of 2 things:

1. That you are a good match with what they're looking for and will add value to their organization
2. That you've done your research and really feel like this job and this organization are the right fit for you

What's the difference between a resume and a cover letter?

- Your resume *states* all of your qualifications for the position you're applying for. Your cover letter highlights a few key qualifications and *explains* HOW they have prepared you to succeed in this position.
- Your resume focuses on the past – what you *have done*. The cover letter focuses on the future – what you *CAN or WILL do* for the organization in this position if hired.
- Your cover letter directly discusses your interest in the job and the organization and the research you've done; your resume utilizes this research, but does not typically directly discuss these things.
- Your cover letter more clearly demonstrates what your proficiency level in written communication is.

Tips for Writing an Effective Letter

TARGET each letter to each specific job and company. NEVER send out a generic cover letter – it wouldn't cover any of the above topics. Remember, this is not just a formality; *you are writing a letter to a real person*. Think about if you had the opportunity to be face-to-face with the hiring manager. What would you say to express your desire for the job, and why they should want to hire you over someone else?

Understand their needs. The employer is not hiring someone just to fill an empty chair, they are hiring because they need something specific accomplished. Understand the goals of this position, and what problems and challenges they need this person to take on. Address how you will be able to do that.

Reference your research. Don't be afraid to include how you learned what you know about the organization and position. If you've been speaking with people who work there, include those names.

Keep the focus on what you can do for them, not what they can do for you. When discussing why this is the right fit for you, focus on things that also benefit them, not just you (such as shared values, enthusiasm for the work, etc.). Leave out things such as pay or location that provide no benefit to the employer.

Find a person's name to address your letter to. This really matters to many employers! Be willing to do some research. Call and ask, talk to people who work there, look for a staff directory, or use LinkedIn. It's ok if you don't get a definitive answer. Any logical name (such as the recruiter, or the head of the department this position is in) shows initiative and is better than no name. If you really can't find a name at all, use a greeting that is still specific to the organization, such as "Dear [Organization Name]:" or "Dear [Organization Name] [Department Name]:"

It typically shouldn't be longer than a page (but you can fit a lot on that page). Use a standard font, ideally the same font as your resume, typically between 10-12pt font size depending on the font. Margins can be adjusted down to 1/2 (0.5) inch.

Even one error can get your application eliminated. Always proofread carefully, and then have another detail-oriented person check it for errors. It's often hard to proofread your own writing!

COVER LETTER WALK-THROUGH

This page will walk you through the format and content of your letter. Be aware that you don't have to organize your content exactly as described below, but this is a common, straightforward approach that is easy to follow.

Your Street Address

Your City, State, Zip Code (or use your resume header here instead of your address)

Current Date (write out the name of the month)

Employer's First and Last Name, Employer's Job Title

Department or Division

Company/Organization Name

Street Address

City, State, Zip Code

Dear First Name:

Paragraph 1 (Introduction): Concisely state your purpose for writing the letter. This paragraph can be short. Specify the position you want to be considered for. Optionally, you can include how you learned about the opening, but consider whether this is valuable information (for example, if you were referred by someone, or met them at a career fair). If you WERE referred to the position by someone within the organization or by a contact of the employer, this is a good place to include that information. Briefly introduce the main points you'll discuss in the rest of your letter, just as you would in an essay.

Paragraph 2 (Body - Qualifications): Note: This can be separated into multiple paragraphs as needed. Use the job description and notes you made during your research to identify the top 2-3 ways you align with what they're looking for and can contribute to the organization within the role you're applying for. You can pull these from your education and any experiences inside or outside the classroom (jobs, internships, fieldwork, volunteer work, extracurricular involvement, research, study abroad, Service Learning and other class projects, etc.). Include the skills you have developed through these experiences, and explain HOW the things you have done prepared you to do this job successfully.

Paragraph 3 (Body - Interest): Explain your interest in the position and the company. Your objective here has two parts. The first is to show the employer that you've done your research, and the second is convince them that you believe this will be a good fit for you. Demonstrate your research by referencing specific things you've learned about them (mission, values, achievements, projects and initiatives, etc.), and then explain how or why each of those things fits with your interests, values, goals, work style, or other attributes. Make sure to focus on things that benefit the organization and not just you.

Paragraph 4 (Closing): Very briefly summarize your main points, and express your interest in the next steps of the process. You may choose to include your contact information here. Make sure to thank the employer for their time and consideration.

Sincerely,

(Sign your name here if submitting a hard copy)

Your First and Last Name Typed

SAMPLE COVER LETTER – For a Post-Graduation Job

12345 E. Boise St.
Boise, ID 83725

February 25, 2019

Jane Doe, Client Experience Manager
Sales Department
Intermountain Technology Consulting
555 Camas Ave.
Boise, ID 83709

Dear Jane:

I am excited to apply for the Client Development Specialist position available with Intermountain Technology Consulting. I was referred to this opening by Jorge Romero, Client Development Coordinator for ITC, who I met while researching your company. I found that my interests and skills closely align with the work ITC is doing, and I believe I could make a significant impact on client development in this role.

While working towards my degree, I have sought out opportunities to apply the skills I am learning to real-world problems. My internship with Levoy Brothers has been especially valuable because it has taught me just how critical intentional client relationship-building is to the success of an organization. Knowing that ITC's clients generally do not possess a high level of technical expertise, I recognize the special importance of being able to make a prospective client feel their needs are fully understood, as well as being able to present technical solutions in language adapted to fit the client's background. As I have worked with clients to develop and implement marketing strategy, I have honed skills in active listening, needs assessment, clear communication of complex information, and effective follow-up. I am confident that these skills will allow me to build relationships with prospective ITC clients that will result in high retention and satisfaction rates.

My experience as a volunteer Bronco Ambassador for Boise State University the past two years has also provided an opportunity for me to develop skills that will help me build relationships with prospective ITC clients. As an Ambassador, my job is to sell Boise State and recruit prospective students to the university. This requires retaining a large bank of information, quickly assessing the needs of prospective students and families, and adapting the sales pitch to target the unique interests and concerns of the individuals in my tour group. Additionally, I have developed skills in communicating with people from diverse backgrounds coming from all over the nation, which will be an asset to me in working to increase ITC's out-of-state client base.

Though I initially considered a career in advertising, the experiences I've had have shown me that what I enjoy most is building relationships with current and potential clients. I also have a passion for technology and the ways in which it can simplify and streamline daily tasks. It is the combination of these two interest areas that led me to discover Intermountain Technology Consulting. In meeting with Mr. Romero to learn more about ITC's goals and challenges, I found that I really connected with your vision of promoting sustainable business practices through strategic use of emerging technology. In fact, for one of my courses this year, I chose to complete a research project on the impact of technology on sustainable business practices. I also found that how your Client Development Team is structured fits with how I am able to do my best work. Because I would be able to focus on a specific industry, I could work more effectively with clients due to having the opportunity to develop a strong knowledge of that industry and its challenges.

I am excited about the opportunity to utilize the relationship-building, communication, and sales skills I have developed in and outside of the classroom to help ITC reach its goal of 20% client growth over the next three years. I would very much appreciate an opportunity to discuss this with you further, and can be reached at (208) 123-4567, or at [johndoe@email.com](mailto: johndoe@email.com). Thank you for your time and consideration, and I look forward to speaking with you!

Sincerely,

John Doe

Cover Letters for Student Jobs - FAQ

Will I need to write cover letters for part-time jobs? Most off-campus part-time jobs that do not require a degree will not require a cover letter, although some might. Many on-campus student jobs WILL require a cover letter, because these jobs are intended to help you develop professional skills you'll need for your career.

The application says a cover letter is optional. Should I write one? If it's a job you really want, write a cover letter! This will show you are serious about the position and set you apart from others.

What's different about cover letters for part-time jobs? Actually, all of the same rules still apply. You just might need to interpret them a little differently for part-time jobs. The main differences are likely to be in your "interest" paragraph, because unlike internships or career positions, the part-time jobs you're applying for may not be as closely aligned with your interests, goals, and background.

I just need a job. How do I talk about why I'm interested in it? It doesn't have to be your dream job for you to honestly address your interest in it. Start by asking yourself what appeals to you about this job. Make a list. Think about:

- What tasks or aspects of the job would I enjoy?
- Are there things about what the organization does or their culture that appeal to me?

For example, maybe it's a customer service job and you have an outgoing personality and enjoy meeting and interacting with new people. Maybe it's an office job and you like being organized and managing details. Maybe you have a personal interest in what the company does. Maybe the company's culture values teamwork and collaboration and that fits the work environment in which you are the most productive.

Here's an example interest paragraph for a student job:

As someone who cares about helping others, I am excited about the opportunity to work at the Career Center. I have personally used multiple services the Career Center offers and believe it is a great resource because preparing for a career is so important to students. The career counselor I met with helped me develop a career preparation plan and figure out how I could "Make College Count!" I would love to help other students access the help I have received. I understand I would be talking with students, helping them figure out what kind of assistance they need, scheduling appointments, and connecting them with appropriate resources. This would be a great fit for me because I would get satisfaction from helping someone get the assistance they need and being able to put a smile on their face in the process.

Is there anything I need to know about letters for jobs on campus?

If you're applying to a job at Boise State, be aware that it's a good idea to talk about the DEPARTMENT you're applying to, and not just your interest in working for Boise State in general. Each department on campus serves a unique purpose, has a distinct mission and culture, and does work that is different from what any other department does.

Visit the department's website to learn as much as you can about them. Then, try to meet with someone in that department, formally or informally, to introduce yourself and learn more. Remember, Boise State employees are here to serve students, so most employees are accessible to you!

The Career Center can help!

We can help you brainstorm content ideas, organize your information, or provide feedback on a draft.

(208) 426-1747 | career.boisestate.edu