A. **Overview**

The cover letter is an integral part of your application materials. It is your opportunity to grab the prospective employer's attention and focus him / her on who you are and why you are a match for the position.

The typical cover letter will have three or four paragraphs:

- **Paragraph 1**
  - State WHO you are;
  - WHY you are writing; and
  - HOW you learned of the employer.
  - Be sure to display your knowledge of the employer.
- **Paragraph 2 (or 2-3)**
  - WHY you are interested in the employer; and
  - WHY you are qualified for the position you seek.
- **Final Paragraph**
  - Refer to any enclosed materials;
  - Talk about future discussions; and
  - Thank the employer.
  - *Always remember to thank the employer for his / her time / consideration.*

Avoid restating the information on your résumé, rather, use your letter to show how the experience shown on your résumé fits the employer's needs. This way, you can personalize your cover letter for each specific employer. ALL COVER LETTERS MUST BE TAILORED TO THE INDIVIDUAL EMPLOYER.

**YOUR COVER LETTER SHOULD:**

- Be tailored to your targeted employer(s)
- Reflect a significant degree of thought as to why you are seeking a position with the particular employer(s)
- Highlight the areas of your résumé that demonstrate the skills and experience appropriate to the prospective employer(s)
- Impress the reader sufficiently that s / he will want to know more about you and will read your accompanying résumé
- Be succinct; no more than one page.
B. Format

1. Address and Style:

The letter should be written in standard business form, with your letterhead (name, address, telephone number and email address) at either the top left or the top center of the page. Your letterhead must be the same on all your documents. Then, list the date on the left. Two spaces below the date, add the addressee's name, title, organization and address above the salutation.

Always write to a named individual. If you do not know the name of the recruitment administrator, you should check the company’s website or call the receptionist to obtain the name of the administrator in charge of hiring. Never address your letter "To Whom It May Concern."

2. Your Introduction:

Many individuals find it difficult to explain why they are writing to a particular employer. While it is relatively easy to apply for an available position, it is more difficult to explain why you are writing when you simply are inquiring about possible positions. In these cases, the focus should be on your match with the prospective employer versus the position itself.

The initial, introductory paragraph should identify your reason for writing to the particular employer. This paragraph should allow for an easy transition to a description of your interest in the particular firm or organization. You can relate your interest in the firm or organization to your career development, as follows:

- Location: "As a native of Chicago, I plan to return there now that I completed my studies at the University of Houston-Downtown."
- Type of Organization: "In considering my future career, I believe I am best suited to a large corporation that offers wide exposure to sophisticated business matters."
- Experience Desired: "As a recent graduate in the College of Public Service, I am particularly interested in obtaining a position that will offer the opportunity to expand my experience in criminal justice."

3. Describing Your Interest in the Organization:

While a statement that you know what the organization does and how that relates to your interests may be sufficient, the more specific your knowledge of the organization and your understanding of how an experience with the organization relates to your career goals, the better. If you have any personal knowledge of or familiarity with the organization or its reputation, you can use that to your advantage. Avoid form letters; do not say "your company" or "your organization" within the body of the letter; use the name of the employer.

For example, a letter directed to the State Attorney’s Office might say: "As an undergraduate student, I majored in criminal justice and had the opportunity to serve as an intern with the
Public Defender's Office. This experience provided me with insight into the criminal justice system and exposure to the role of the public defender within that system. As a result of that experience, now that I have graduated, I am interested in working as a Probation Officer.”

4. **Describing Your Qualifications:**

Beyond demonstrating that you understand what the prospective employer does and how that fits into your goals, your cover letter should also demonstrate that you are prepared to meet the needs of the employer. Accordingly, your letter may include a brief paragraph highlighting the reasons why you are qualified for the position sought. You should not simply restate experiences set forth in your résumé but emphasize those elements of your background – whether academic (grades or courses taken), experiential (internship, work or volunteer experience) or personal (writing or researching skills) that may be of particular interest to the employer. You should present such experience in a way that instills in the reader a desire to find out more about you and explore your résumé more thoroughly. Example: "I have prepared myself at the University of Houston Downtown for a position in a communications department. In addition to majoring in Communications, I interned for the Chronicle during my Junior and Senior years of college, where I wrote copy and cite checked facts for articles."

If you are submitting an application to an organization or agency engaged in non-profit work, your letter should include a demonstration of your commitment to public interest work in general and to the specific substantive area in which the organization or agency practices.

Additionally, if you are trying to obtain a screening interview with an out-of-state organization, it is beneficial to suggest that you will be in the area around a certain date and would be available to interview (at your own expense).

In all instances, remember to state your points positively and concisely, with the goal of instilling in the reader the desire to learn more about you.

5. **Your Closing:**

The principal purpose of the closing is to express appreciation for the reader's consideration of your application and to show interest in further discussing / interviewing for the position.

Example 1:
"I am very interested in the opportunity to begin my career with AB & C and would be available for an interview at your convenience. I greatly appreciate your consideration of my enclosed résumé and look forward to hearing from you in the near future."

Example 2:
"I appreciate your consideration of my enclosed résumé and would welcome the opportunity to learn more about AB & C. I will be in the Chicago area the week of October 19 and will be available to meet with you during that time. I look forward to hearing from you in the near future."
COVER LETTER EXAMPLES

Format 1 – Outline

Your Letterhead:
Your Name
Address, Phone, Email

Month, Date, Year

Individual's Name, Title
Firm / Organization Name
Address
City, ST Zip

Dear Mr. / Ms.:

Give your status, the purpose of the letter and the name of the position for which you are applying. If someone has referred you, mention that person's name. Tell how you learned about the position or the firm.

Tell why you are interested in working there and be as specific as possible (firm size, mix of practice areas, geographic location, a certain specialty). Tell them what it is about their firm that interests you. Include the firm name in the body of the paragraph.

Tell why you are qualified for the position. Qualifications can include: prior work or volunteer experience, externships / internships, coursework, undergraduate major, journal participation, skills in researching, writing, analyzing, etc. Focus on only 1-2 skills / qualifications that you have. Explain how your qualifications fit into the position.

Refer to your enclosed résumé and any other materials requested / included. Express your desire to meet and further discuss the position / interview. Thank them for their consideration of your candidacy.

Very truly yours,

(Signature)

Typed Name
Dear Mr./Ms. LastName,

My name is ____________, and I would like to express my strong interest in the admissions counselor position at ABC University’s School of Business, as listed on highereducationjobs.com. My experience as an admissions counselor and abilities as a project manager make me an ideal candidate for the position.

Working in admissions for the past five years has provided me with the qualifications to meet your requirements. As an admissions counselor for XYZ College, I recruit, process, and evaluate over 8,500 applicants each year. By thoroughly analyzing candidates and conducting dozens of informational sessions and seminars, I successfully contributed to the rise in student retention by over 15% this past year. Having worked as graduate assistant in the Greenfield University Business School, I am also particularly familiar with MBA admissions and recruiting. Therefore, I am a skilled admissions counselor who is familiar with your particular needs.

As a project manager, these skills fulfill the needs you requested in your job application. For example, I am currently responsible for organizing and overseeing XYZ College’s annual Welcome Accepted Candidates Day. This job involves selecting and managing caterers, event spaces, professors, and student volunteers. Having successfully run this event for the past two years, I know that my attention to detail and commitment to quality you require in an admissions counselor will benefit the students at ABC University’s School of Business.

The number of years of experience in admissions (particularly business school admissions) and my skill as a project manager would make me an asset to your fine admissions team at ABC University’s School of Business. I have enclosed my resume, and will contact you next week to see if we might find a time to speak together. Thank you so much for your time and consideration.

Christopher Robin
Sample 2

Mary Thomas
87 Washington Street
Smithfield, CA 08055
123-123-1234
e-mail

Date

Mr. John Doe
Smithfield Elementary School
Main Street
Smithfield, CA 08055

Dear Mr. Doe,

Through the University of Houston Downtown’s Career Development Center, I learned of an elementary teaching position in your school district. As a 2015 graduate of the University of Houston Downtown, I have student teaching experience on the third and sixth grade level in both suburban and urban school districts.

At the present time I am teaching “at risk” preschool children. This position enables me to provide these students with a “head start” in mastering basic skills. My creativity and nurturing, and most of all, patience, drives me to be the best professional I can with this population.

In my junior year at the University of Houston Downtown, a passion for and knowledge of horses created an opportunity for me work for the Racing Museum. This position allowed me to teach every fourth grade class in the local school system, as well as coordinate field trips with classroom instruction.

It is my goal to combine my range of experience with my ability to be a compassionate, enthusiastic, intelligent teacher who will make a positive contribution to your school district.

I would welcome an interview and hope to hear from you at your earliest convenience. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Mary Thomas

Enclosure
Dear Mr. John Doe:

Thank you for speaking with me on Wednesday, December 10, about internship opportunities at the Houston Chronicle. As a junior majoring in Interdisciplinary Studies with a minor in Communications, I am very interested in seeking an internship with the Houston Chronicle. It has always been my strong desire to pursue an editing career, and the Houston Chronicle is without a doubt the place to be as our city’s premier newspaper.

As indicated in the enclosed resume, I have much to offer the Houston Chronicle. My coursework and position on the newsletter staff have helped me to develop strong writing skills and an eye for detail. Additionally, my summer jobs have taught me how to interact with a diverse group of people in a fast-paced and changing environment.

As a hard-working and self-motivated individual who is eager to learn, I would welcome the possibility of becoming a part of the Houston Chronicle team for the spring semester. I would like the opportunity to meet in person to share more about my background and the skills I would bring to your company.

If you need any additional information, please contact me at 123-123-1234, or thomasm1@gator.uhd.edu. Thank you in advance for your consideration, and I look forward to the opportunity to interview with the Houston Chronicle.

Sincerely,

Mary Thomas
# Cover Letter Rubric

**How to use the Cover Letter Rubric**: Now that you have drafted your cover letter, use the following rubric to check your work and make necessary changes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Business format and overall quality of writing ability</strong></td>
<td><strong>Cover letter should get you an interview. Score 3 points each</strong>&lt;br&gt; This letter uses correct business format with date and addresses at the top, and a signature at the bottom. This letter is clear and concise, and grammatically correct. There are no spelling errors.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cover letter could land you an interview. This is an average letter (borderline case). Score 2 points each</strong>&lt;br&gt; This letter uses correct business format with date and addresses at the top, and a signature at the bottom. There are minimal grammar and spelling errors. While its content is decent, this letter lacks a compelling call to action for the employer.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cover letter needs significant improvement and would be discarded during screening. Score 1 point each</strong>&lt;br&gt; Business formatting is not used in this letter. There is no address or date at the top. This letter is not signed. There are multiple grammar and spelling errors. The content of this letter does not make sense to the reader.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Section 1: Introduction</strong></td>
<td><strong>This section identifies the position for which you are applying and explains why you are interested in the job. You have described how you heard about the opening. The wording is creative and catches an employer’s attention quickly.</strong>&lt;br&gt; This section identifies the position you are seeking. This letter does not describe how you heard about the opening. You vaguely describe why you are interested in this job. This section is bland and might not catch someone’s attention fast enough.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Section 2: Identification of skills and experiences as related to position</strong></td>
<td><strong>This letter identifies one or two of your strongest qualifications and clearly relates how these skills apply to the job at hand. This letter explains specifically why you are interested in the position and this type of job, company, and/or location.</strong>&lt;br&gt; This letter identifies one of your qualifications, but it is not related to the position at hand. This letter restates what is on your resume with minimal additional information. You explain why you are interested in the position but are too vague.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Section 3: Closing</strong></td>
<td><strong>This letter refers the reader to your resume or any other enclosed documents. This letter thanks the reader for taking time to read this letter. You describe how you will follow up with the employer.</strong>&lt;br&gt; You thank the reader for taking time to read this letter. You do not refer the reader to your resume or application materials. This letter assumes that the employer will contact you to follow up.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>This letter does not thank the reader for taking time to review this letter. There is no reference to a resume or other materials. This letter does not mention any plan for follow up.</strong></td>
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**Total**<br>A score of 6 is 50%