



St. Joseph's College
NEW YORK

OFFICE OF CAREER DEVELOPMENT
AND ENGAGEMENT



CAREER GUIDE

COVER LETTER WRITING

A cover letter is a way to introduce yourself to potential employers or organizations. Since it is one of the first documents that a potential employer will see, it is important to make a good first impression. Your cover letter gives you the opportunity to express your interest in a position and indicate why you are a good match for the particular organization. It is usually one page in length and it is sent with your résumé.

Getting Started

Before you write your cover letter, it is important to learn about the company or organization and the position you are seeking. Research the company on its website or through your network and understand their mission statement and what they value in an employee. If there is a job posting, read it carefully and plan on incorporating keywords into your letter. Writing a cover letter can be challenging, as you are writing about yourself and your qualifications without sounding pompous or self-centered. To overcome this challenge, explain how your values, goals, skills and experience match the position you are trying to obtain. Your cover letter should change with every position that you apply for. Always tailor your cover letter for each position and company.

TYPES OF COVER LETTERS

Application Letter

The application letter is written to employers in response to a specific job opening. As with your résumé, its primary goal is to help you obtain an interview. An application letter provides detailed information on why you are qualified for the job you are applying for. Effective application letters explain the reasons for your interest in the specific organization and identify your most relevant skills or experiences.

An Inquiry Letter

A letter of inquiry, also known as a prospecting letter or letter of interest, is sent to companies that may be hiring but haven't listed any specific job openings. Your inquiry letter should contain information on why the company interests you and why your skills and experience would be an asset to the company. Although you are not responding to a particular job opening, it is advised to include examples of your accomplishments and skills.

Networking Letter

This is written to someone who is working in a career field or organization in which you are interested. Its purpose is to obtain a meeting or a phone call to learn more about the person's responsibilities. Identify how you acquired the person's information, what you would like to learn and your availability. The letter is designed to acquire information, not a job.

FORMATTING YOUR COVER LETTER

Heading:

Your name at the bottom of letter only or use the same heading that you used for your résumé

Your address

City, State ZIP

Phone and email address

Date

Contact's name

Contact's title

Organization's name

Organization's address

City, State ZIP

Salutation

It is best to address your letter to a specific individual (Dear Dr. Jones.) Make every effort to find the name of the person who will be receiving your letter. If you cannot find the name of the person, list an appropriate department or generic title such as Hiring Manager.

Introduction

The first paragraph of your letter is very simple: It states the position you are applying for, identifies the employer and/or department, and describes how you learned about it, whether through an online posting, a referral or a print ad. The second sentence of your opener is your thesis — a one- or two-sentence identification of your qualifications for the specific position. It lays out your central argument as to why the employer should interview you. The easiest way to write this thesis is to refer to the job posting or description and identify the two or three most important elements the employer is looking for and then align your experience accordingly.

Body

The body of your letter is derived exactly from your thesis statement. It usually includes one or multiple paragraphs. This is your opportunity to elaborate on your strengths, specific skills, personal attributes and experience and connect them to the requirements of the position. Emphasize some items from your résumé, but do not simply repeat the same information. Highlight examples from your academic or work experience, or both, that matches the requirements of the position. Illustrate that you have knowledge about the position, organization, and industry, then show that you are the perfect candidate for the position based on your interest, experience, skills and academic background.

Conclusion

This summarizes your thesis and informs employers you have enclosed or attached your résumé. State whether you will follow up with the employer within a given period of time or if you will await contact from them. Finally, close by requesting an interview and thank the employer for their time and consideration. For example: "I am looking forward to meeting with you to discuss my qualifications further."

Closing and Signature

Use a standard closing such as "Sincerely." If you are mailing a hard copy, leave three or four lines for your signed name. If you are emailing the document, simply type your name on the line below your closing.

FORMATTING TIPS

The basic format of a cover letter follows similar guidelines of a business letter. As you design your cover letter, consider the following:

- Single-space your cover letter and use a basic font in 11- or 12-point size.
- Leave a space between addresses and date in the heading.
- Leave a space between your heading (contact info) and salutation ("Dear").
- Leave a space between each paragraph, unless each paragraph is indented.
- Leave at least three spaces between your complimentary close ("Sincerely,") and typed name.
- Sign your name in ink between your complimentary close and typed name.
- Use standard margins (usually one inch).
- Align all paragraphs to the left of the page.

COVER LETTER CHECKLIST

Check each of the following tips before sending out your cover letter:

- Edit the letter and check to ensure that it is well-written and free of spelling and grammatical errors.
- Utilize a one-page format, single-spaced, 11- or 12-point type and a font that is easy to read.
- Address the letter to a specific person or to a company position.
- Include specific examples of qualifications and achievements that are most relevant to the job.
- Indicate knowledge of the company and strong interest in working there.
- Tailor the letter to the specific job or company.
- Include your contact information and request an interview.
- Thank the reader(s) for their time and consideration.
- Sign the letter.

SAMPLE COVER LETTERS

- [About.com](#)
- [Career One Stop](#)
- [College Grad](#)
- [Monster](#)
- [Quintessential Careers](#)

COVER LETTER REVIEW

The Office of Career Development and Engagement is located at SJC Long Island in O'Connor Hall, Room E301, or at SJC Brooklyn in Tuohy Hall, Room 205. We invite you to make an appointment with a member of our counseling staff to help you with any other career-related topic. Career counseling sessions are generally 30-60 minutes in length, and appointments can be scheduled by contacting the Long Island office at 631.687.1248 or the Brooklyn office at 718.940.5852.





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SJC Brooklyn

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ABOUT ST. JOSEPH'S COLLEGE

Founded in 1916, St. Joseph's College is an independent, coeducational college with campuses in Brooklyn and on Long Island, in addition to SJC Online. We have a long history of providing an excellent, yet affordable, education. Our reputation has consistently earned SJC a place in the *U.S. News & World Report's* annual "America's Best Colleges" issue. We also have been highly ranked by *Forbes* and named one of New York's "Colleges of Distinction."