



The Cover Letter

Purpose

The purpose of a cover letter is to give a prospective employer additional information regarding why you are interested in a position, the skills you have related to a position, and why you feel you are the best qualified candidate. A well-planned cover letter is just as important as an impressive resume and together they form an important resource in a job campaign. Your letter is a reflection of you and how you approach your work – just like the resume, the cover letter is a written representation of your brand.

You should prepare a separate, personalized cover letter for each position you apply for in which a cover letter is requested by the company. Each cover letter should highlight your skills and experiences that match with the qualifications of the job you are applying for. When posting opportunities in Handshake, many companies do not require or request a cover letter.

Content

A cover letter consists of THREE paragraphs:

- Opening – states what position you are applying for and why you are interested in the position
- Middle – discusses your strengths and qualifications as they relate to the position
- Closing – identifies the next steps

Remember, keep the letter to ONE PAGE and keep it concise. **The letter should refer the reader to the resume, which is always included with the cover letter.**

Opening Paragraph:

The opening should catch the reader's attention in a businesslike manner; avoid gimmicks or catchy phrases. Clearly state the position you are applying for, where you found the position, and why you are particularly interested in this position with this company. Here are some sample openings:

- Reply to a job listing:
"I am applying for the Financial Analyst position recently posted on Handshake at the Fisher College of Business."
- Name a mutual acquaintance:
"Professor Brutus Buckeye of the Accounting Department informed me that your firm is looking for an accounting major who is interested in tax accounting."
- Make a connection with the position and why you are interested:
"My two years of retailing experience in a department store similar to yours, my business education, plus a sincere interest in Retail Management have helped me to learn the basic requirements for running a department efficiently. I am ready to contribute the practical skills I have acquired by becoming a part of your Management Leadership Training Program."
- Briefly explain a personal reason why you want the job. Your reasons can be based on industry preferences, geographic location of the company, the fit between your values/interests and the company's services/products, or a combination of these or other variables. A genuine show of enthusiasm, purpose, and knowledge will set you apart from others who send generic form letters.
"With an Associate's Degree in Culinary Arts and a Bachelor's Degree in Marketing, I am very familiar with Williams-Sonoma's excellent products and am excited about beginning a career that can tap into both of my passions."

Middle Paragraph:

After you have caught the reader's attention, you must present your basic qualifications for the job. Select and emphasize 3-4 key points in educational credentials, work experience, and relevant personal qualities that connect with the qualifications outlined in the job description. If you do not have a job description, use Handshake and internet resources,

such as O*Net, to find descriptions for similar positions. It is important to have a list of requirements and qualifications as you begin the middle of the cover letter. Here are some examples for the middle paragraph:

- Show you have both a broad business background and depth in a particular major.
"I have the finance and accounting knowledge needed for this position. In my coursework, I have taken five courses in Finance and four courses in Accounting."
- Highlight how your education has prepared you for the job you seek.
"As part of my Operations specialization, I had the unique opportunity to take a two-quarter Six Sigma course and earn a Green Belt. This is a certification that few undergraduates attain."
- Explain how electives like writing, communication or computer courses reinforce and diversify your qualifications.
"Knowing the importance of excellent writing skills, I minored in English with an emphasis on composition. I put those skills to work by writing numerous articles for Fisher INK, a student-run business publication."
- Give examples of how you've supplemented academic experience with internship or part-time work experience.
"As you can see on my resume, I have worked for Applebee's for three years. In addition to developing my customer service skills through my role as a server, I have also worked in an office setting as an administrative assistant for the company. This allowed me to interact with upper level management and be a daily part of what goes on internally in a business to keep it running smoothly."
- Give examples demonstrating you can handle responsibility and manage your time well.
"In addition to my coursework and working part-time, I have been actively involved in a professional business fraternity, Delta Sigma Pi, with leadership roles the past two years. I am able to plan ahead, prioritize, and manage my time effectively."
- Show that you have the ability to work well with other people.
"I recently completed an internship at the Target Distribution Center where I worked with a diverse group of individuals. I was named Most Valuable Employee in July for my teamwork in getting the job done."
- Demonstrate that you understand the importance of the role to which you are applying.
"I know that you rely on your Account Managers to help you increase your market share and I have the interpersonal and organizational skills to help you achieve those results."

Closing Paragraph:

The last paragraph of the letter identifies the next steps in the process. It calls for action without begging or commanding and is where you should express your interest in an interview. Make action easy by indicating that you will follow up and say when you plan to do so. Give employers the chance to follow up by giving your phone number and, if necessary, the best hours to call. It is best to give a personal number that goes directly to you. A voicemail makes you even more accessible to potential employers. Make sure your voicemail has a professional message for callers that includes your name so employers know they reached the correct person. Some examples:

- Indicate when you will follow up:
I will be getting in touch with you in the next two weeks to confirm that you have received my resume.
- Indicate how they can contact you:
Should you wish to contact me, I can be reached by phone at 614-295-1234 or by email at mary.jones@gmail.com.
- Conclude with politeness:
Thank you for your time and consideration.

Formatting Your Letter

Your cover letter should observe the following format:

- Use a professional business format including your address, the date, and the employers address at the top (see attached samples).
- When possible, try to find a contact name that you can address the letter to. If you do not know the name, use something generic such as "Internship Coordinator" or "Human Resources Director".
- Should be only ONE PAGE in length, but there should also be enough text so that the page is nicely filled with text.
- Match margins to resume – 0.5" minimum.
- Written in a font and point size that is easy to read – you may want to use the same font as your resume.

Your cover letter is an example of your ability to write a professional business letter, so having the correct format is important. The examples that follow will be using block format where everything (the date, address, salutation, paragraphs, and closing) is lined up on the left margin. There are other formats that are appropriate for professional business letters, but refer to a formatting guide to ensure that you are formatting your letter appropriately. *You will note that there is an inserted TEXT box on the samples that point out formatting styles and tips.*

Additionally

- Watch grammar and spelling. Remember that this is an example of your writing skills.
- Keep the tone and content professional. Avoid using humor. Avoid using “!” or “☺”
- Don’t minimize your experience. The purpose of the letter is to highlight your skills, not to apologize for where they may be lacking. Be able to support the statements you make about yourself with examples.
- Proofread multiple times, and ask others to edit your letter for mistakes.
- Visit a [Peer Career Coach](#) during their walk-in hours to have them review it!

Emailing a Cover Letter

When you are emailing a resume to an employer (and no cover letter was requested) the body of the email should be written as a cover letter. You do not need to include the address/date headers, rather begin with “Dear Mr./Ms. Lastname” and make sure you indicate you have attached your resume as requested. See “Emailing a Cover Letter” at the end of this document.

If the employer specifically asks you to “send” or “attach” a cover letter to an email, create a separate Word or PDF document with your cover letter and attach that to the email. In the body of the email, put a brief message in the body of the email to encourage the employer to open the attachment(s). See the “Emailing a Cover Letter” sample.

When saving your cover letter (and resume!) save it and send it as a PDF document. Title the document to include your first and last name.

As always, make sure that you are using a professional email address for all correspondence with employers. The email address that you use for your cover letter should match the one that is listed on your resume.

Cover Letter of Inquiry

If you are interested in a company that may be hiring, but doesn’t have a position posted, you can reach out to them with a cover letter of inquiry.

A cover letter consists of THREE paragraphs:

- Opening – states what type of position you are interested in and why you are interested in the company
- Middle – discusses your strengths as they relate to the type of position you are interested in
- Closing – identifies the next steps you will take to follow up with them

Remember, keep the letter to ONE PAGE and keep it concise. **The letter should refer the reader to the resume, which is always enclosed with the cover letter.** See the “Cover Letter of Inquiry” sample.

COVER LETTER SAMPLE

(For letters attached to an email)

Anita Williams
555 Stinchcomb Drive Apt. 4
Columbus, OH 43202

This is your mailing address. Even though your resume may have two addresses, use your local mailing address for your cover letter.

October 9, 20XX

Date

Megan Davis
Macy's
530 West Spring Street, Ste. 200
Cincinnati, Ohio 45217

This is the employer's mailing address.

Dear Ms. Davis:

Address it to a "real" person whenever possible. Use Mr./Ms. ____ rather than the employer's first name. Try to avoid "To Whom It May Concern".

It was a pleasure speaking with you at the Fisher Fall Career Fair on Wednesday, September 9, to discuss Macy's store management internship program. I was very impressed with the scope of the internship, specifically that you provide interns with a variety of highly visible and impactful projects in the short span of twelve weeks.

Through my education at the Fisher College of Business, I have developed an ability to think outside the box. The best example of this was through my sales internship selling Cutco knives where I created a marketing plan that increased my sales by 15% over a two month period. I also pride myself on being very driven and hardworking, as I have self-financed over 50% of my education through being a full-time student and working part-time at least 20 hours per week. This has allowed me to improve my organization and time management skills, which I know will be useful to this internship since this frequently requires students to multitask a variety of responsibilities.

Notice that the student uses numbers to describe the experience. This helps make the cover letter easy to read and memorable.

I have already submitted my resume through Handshake for your review and I hope to be selected for an on-campus interview. Should you wish to contact me, I can be reached by phone at 614-295-6383 or by email at anita.williams@gmail.com. I look forward to further discussing with you my qualifications for this position.

Sincerely,

Anita Williams

If you are sending your cover letter as an attachment to an email and you do not have a digital version of your signature, you only need to leave one space between "Sincerely" and your name (as shown here).

If you are not using your osu.edu email address for your job search, make sure that the one you are using is professional.

General Format Notes

- 12-point Tahoma font was used to fill up the page.
- Margins are 1" all around.

COVER LETTER SAMPLE

(For letters attached to an email)

Anne Marie Schroder

216 Washington Drive • Columbus, OH 43210 • (661) 536-9433 • schroder.1@osu.edu

January 10, 20XX

In this example, the student is using the same header information as what is on her resume.

← Internship Coordinator
Procter & Gamble
5289 Vine Street
Cincinnati, Ohio 45217

If you do not know the name of the company's contact, use something generic like "Internship Coordinator" or "Human Resources Director."

Dear P&G Internship Coordinator:

I am a third-year marketing student at The Ohio State University. I saw your posting on Handshake about the Assistant Brand Manager Internship position. This opportunity is very interesting to me as it leverages my interpersonal communication skills, innovative thought process, and leadership ability.

The core purpose and principles of Procter & Gamble align well with my career vision of providing value to my employer and its business partners. I have been recognized for my creative thinking, external focus, and passion for winning through my employment at American Eagle. I am actively involved with the American Marketing Association and a variety of community service activities through The Ohio State University. Collaborating with both peers and corporate representatives as well as learning how to effectively implement innovative marketing strategies through my experience with the American Marketing Association has provided insight to the value of managing mutually productive relationships. Additionally, my involvement with Buckeye Leadership Society has allowed me to be a leader by mentoring homeless teenagers in Columbus, Ohio.

I would greatly appreciate your review and consideration of my attached resume. I will be getting in touch with you in the next two weeks to confirm that you have received my resume. Please feel free to contact me at (661) 536-9433 or schroder.1@osu.edu if you have any questions. I look forward to hearing back from you regarding this opportunity.

Respectfully,
Anne Schroder

← If you are sending your cover letter as an attachment to an email and you do not have a digital version of your signature, you only need to leave one space between "Respectfully" and your name (as shown here).

General Format Notes

- Using the same header as what you have on your resume can be a nice way to show professional consistency between your cover letter and resume.
- If possible, try to find the name of a company contact. When this is not possible, use the suggested titles listed above.

EMAILING A COVER LETTER

What to say in the body of an email when the cover letter is attached to the email

Dear Mr. Lincoln,

I am writing to apply for the Financial Accounting position you advertised in Handshake on February 7, 20XX. Per your request, I have attached my resume and cover letter to this email.

Please contact me at (614) 471-5743 if you have any additional questions. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Best regards,

Latonya Howard

General Format Notes

- In this example the student is attaching both her resume and cover letter to the email. This is what would be in the body of that email.
- As in the previous sample, make sure you include a subject line. Here an appropriate subject line might be "Applicant for Financial Accountant (Job ID: 239)."
- Keep this email short! The recruiter will read about you in your cover letter so you do not need to write any specifics in this email.

EMAILING A COVER LETTER

When the cover letter is in the body of the email (if employer did not specifically request a cover letter)

Dear Mr. Martinez:

Teresa Menza, a Customer Service Representative for Southwest Airlines, recommended that I contact you regarding a possible internship in the customer relations department at John Glenn Columbus International Airport. I am a student at The Ohio State University pursuing a Bachelor of Science in Business Administration degree with a double major in Marketing and Logistics. I expect to graduate in December 20XX.

I have had significant experience in customer service and logistics. Currently I work in the Office of Career Management in the Fisher College of Business at Ohio State as a Peer Career Coach. Each day, I interact with students who need assistance with developing a resume, preparing for interviews and handling other career issues. Last summer, I completed a six-month customer relations internship with Unilever where I had the opportunity to work with a wide variety of internal and external customers. I was honored to be the first intern to receive the company's award for customer service.

I will call you the week of October 9th to discuss potential internship opportunities in the customer service department. If you have questions, please contact me at (614) 555-9867. Thank you for your time in reviewing my resume.

Sincerely,

Luc Gernay

General Format Notes

- Make sure you include something in the subject line of your email. In this case, an appropriate subject might be: "Logistics Student Seeking Customer Service Internship."
- No need to include a date or address information, but do make sure you include your phone number.
- Make sure you attach whatever documents you promise to send!
- Keep it short...try for 200 words or less.
- Including spaces between the paragraphs makes emails easier to read.

EMAILING A COVER LETTER OF INQUIRY

When the cover letter is in the body of the email

(If you are interested in reaching out to a company that may be hiring, but doesn't have a position posted)

Dear Ms. Clarke:

I am currently a junior at The Ohio State University in the Fisher College of Business, earning my Bachelor of Science in Business Administration and specializing in Logistics Management. I am seeking an internship for this summer and while researching opportunities in the industry of consumer and packaged goods, I found that Homage is Columbus based and growing each year by expanding their brand with collegiate representation throughout the state and around the country. I am writing to inquire about possible internship opportunities with Homage and more generally to learn about operations and logistics systems within your company.

My work background, extra-curricular involvement, and coursework have supplied me with many skills and an understanding of the supply chain and logistics. I currently work 12 hours per week as a manager for shipping and receiving at the Ohio Union where we handle all incoming and outgoing packages for events like career fairs, weddings, receptions, special guests, and bookstore inventory. In addition, I serve as secretary for The Logistics Association (TLA), an undergraduate student organization that has provided me opportunities to understand logistics on a world-wide basis and the best practices involved in the logistics field by participating in site visits to local companies and hearing guest speakers talk about their industry experience. Through the secretary role, I also develop social and educational programming each semester for up to 50 participants. I have really enjoyed my logistics classes so far, in particular, Supply Chain Management and Building a Sustainable Supply Chain, and look forward to applying these course concepts in a business setting.

I will be staying in the Columbus area during the summer break, May 5th through August 22nd. I will call you next week to see if it would be possible to meet with you in early April to discuss possible internship opportunities and to see if you could recommend anyone in the logistics department at Homage that I might be able to reach out to for an informational interview. I have attached my resume, which provides additional details about my background and experience.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Hannah Sharp
Fisher College of Business | The Ohio State University
Logistics Management
(614) 123-4567
sharp.1@osu.edu