



Writing Cover Letters

General Tips

- Every cover letter will be *different, tailored* to each position, and only *one page*.
- Choose a *couple* of key experiences from your résumé, and use the cover letter to *synthesize* what you learned or gained from those experiences. Do not simply reiterate what is on your résumé.
- *Demonstrate* that you have skills; don't just say that you do.
- Focus on the organization and *how your skills and experiences will help its members and mission*. Share experiences most related to the job description and *connect them to the needs of each organization*.
- Save the cover letter as a .pdf file for sending or uploading so your page formatting will remain intact.
- *For internships*: Mention how the internship fits in to your future goals and plans.

Specific Guidelines

See the reverse of this page for an example of a properly formatted cover letter. The letter has 440 words in the four body paragraphs—and it completely fills the page. Do not be tempted to shrink the typeface below 12 (or, depending on the typeface, 11) point or to reduce the margins to under 0.75”.

Letterhead: You may use the same contact information header from your résumé, but you may scale down the size of your name.

Date: *Month day, year* (e.g., **April 4, 2014**)

Inside Address: *Name of Contact Person* (if you have one)
Title of Contact Person (if you know it)
Organization Name
Street Address (or P.O. Box)
City, State Zip Code (or City, Country)

Salutation: Follow the salutation by a colon (business correspondence), not a comma (personal correspondence).
For example: **Dear Ms. Smith:** *or*

Dear Internship Selection Committee: *or*
Dear Director of Human Resources:

Paragraph 1: State the position for which you are applying, where you learned about it, your interest in the position, why you would be a great fit for the position and the organization, and why you want to contribute to the work the organization is doing. (For the latter, you'll have to research the organization's missions, values, etc.)

Paragraph 2: Choose *one* experience that is related to the desired skills, qualities, and experience the organization has listed in the job or internship description. Demonstrate *with details and examples* how you gained the experience, and explain how it relates to the position for which you are applying. The last sentence should summarize how your experience connects with this position. (For example: “With my strong outreach and teaching skills that I gained by working with the Red Cross, I could successfully assist the National Service Knowledge Network with the training of community volunteers.”)

Paragraph 3: Same as for paragraph 2, but focus on a different experience or skills. At some point in your letter, refer to your accompanying résumé: a parenthetical “see résumé” is all you need.

Paragraph 4: Create a *summary sentence* about your skills and abilities that you would bring to the organization. Tell them you appreciate their time and consideration. If you have special circumstances that would make an interview challenging (e.g., you are studying abroad), explain the situation briefly and ensure that connectivity for an interview (for example) will not be a problem.

Complimentary Close: Capitalize only the first word; follow by a comma, as follows: **Sincerely,** *or*
Sincerely yours, *or*
Respectfully,

Signature: Scan a hard copy of your signature at the library and save it as an image (.jpg, .png, etc.). Place this image in your letter (another reason why generating a .pdf is a good idea).

Typed Name: Match your preferred name here with your signature; but use your official name in the letterhead.



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January 4, 2013

Ms. Lucy V. Ortiz
Manager, Bronx Outreach Office
Shelter for Abused Women and Children
P.O. Box 10102
New York, NY 10259-0102

Dear Ms. Ortiz:

Please consider my application for your GRINNELLINK Internship at the Shelter for Abused Women and Children in New York City. Like your organization, I also seek to “lead the community to prevent, protect, and prevail over domestic violence through advocacy, empowerment, and social change.” My current and previous work—combined with my passions in advocacy and tutoring children with disabilities—exemplify the ways I have sought to advance social change. I am currently pursuing a degree in psychology at Grinnell and hope to use my skills and develop my interest in counseling psychology through a summer internship with the Shelter for Abused Women and Children.

I believe individual interactions and connections are key components in the healing and growth process. In that vein, I pioneered the Grinnell College Student Advocates group (see résumé), which raises awareness about sexual assault and domestic violence on campus, manages a crisis phone line, and supports victims emotionally and by connecting them with other campus resources. My ability to set goals and achieve them allowed me to identify realistic priorities for the first year of campus outreach and to complete five trainings for faculty, staff, and students. I am also a skillful communicator who works well as a team member: I collaborated effectively with fellow advocates on several projects, including the design and launch of an integrated marketing plan for our services. With my background in advocating for victims of sexual assault and domestic violence, I will contribute to the mission and services of your shelter.

Working with children and families is another interest of mine. While volunteering throughout high school at Friendship Circle in Livingston, New Jersey, my love for working with children became apparent; I furthered this love by working with children as a summer volunteer at the Noble Education Center in Woodland Hills, California. In these positions, I interacted one-on-one and in small groups with children with disabilities, focusing on social skills and language development. I value initiative and seek to find ways to meet the needs of an organization and the people it serves. In both positions, I incorporated music into my work with children, using music as a dynamic teaching tool through games and vocal exercises.

Additionally, I converse with ease in three different languages: English, Mandarin, and Spanish; I would use these skills to support people from a variety of backgrounds. In summary, with my experience working with children and communicating with people from a variety of backgrounds—and with my committed desire to end sexual assault and domestic violence—I would both contribute to and gain valuable perspectives from the Shelter for Abused Women and Children. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Ben Cheng