

COVER LETTER QUICK TIPS

A cover letter is either a formal letter or an e-mail that is sent to an employer in order to introduce and highlight your resume. Use your cover letter to bring your resume to life, demonstrate your enthusiasm and creativity, and tell an employer why you are uniquely qualified for the job.

1st Paragraph - Statement of Intent

Explain clearly what type of job you are seeking and express interest in the organization. If you are writing a solicited cover letter (responding to a specific opening), indicate how and where you learned of the opportunity and/or the organization.

If you are writing an unsolicited cover letter (not responding to an opening, but trying to create a position), start off with your solution to a problem within the company. Then state the specific position and department you would like to work in. Unsolicited cover letters usually require a lot of research.

2nd Paragraph - Summary of Qualifications

Mention one or two key qualifications you think would be of greatest interest to the employer. Tell why the organization, location, or the type of work appeals to you. Invite the reader to review your resume.

3rd Paragraph-Request for Action

Close by making a specific request for an interview, and indicate that you will follow up with a phone call. Don't leave it to the employer to set up the interview.

Additional Tips

- Target your letter to a particular position and organization.
- Address it to a specific individual; don't use sexist language like "Dear Gentlemen."
- Talk in terms of what you can contribute to the organization and not how it will benefit you.
- Convey focused career goals.
- Be honest and always be able to back up your claims.
- Be brief and keep it simple—one full page is probably too much.
- Remember to sign it.
- And always proofread!

Basic Format for a Cover Letter

Your Street Address
City, State Zip Code
Telephone Number
Email Address

Month, Day, Year

Mr./Ms./Dr. FirstName LastName
Title
Name of Organization
Street or P. O. Box Address
City, State Zip Code

Dear Mr./Ms./Dr. LastName:

Opening paragraph: State why you are writing; how you learned of the organization or position, and basic information about yourself.

2nd paragraph: Tell why you are interested in the employer or type of work the employer does (Simply stating that you are interested does not tell why, and can sound like a form letter). Demonstrate that you know enough about the employer or position to relate your background to the employer or position. Mention specific qualifications which make you a good fit for the employer's needs. This is an opportunity to explain in more detail relevant items in your resume. Refer to the fact that your resume is enclosed. Mention other enclosures if such are required to apply for a position.

3rd paragraph: Indicate that you would like the opportunity to interview for a position or to talk with the employer to learn more about their opportunities or hiring plans. State what you will do to follow up, such as telephone the employer within two weeks. If you will be in the employer's location and could offer to schedule a visit, indicate when. State that you would be glad to provide the employer with any additional information needed. Thank the employer for her/his consideration.

Sincerely,

(Your handwritten signature)

Your name typed

Enclosure(s) (refers to resume, etc.)

Cover Letter for a Posted Position

1000 Terrace View Apts.
Blacksburg, VA 24060
(540) 555-4523
stuvw@vt.edu

March 25, 2003

Mr. John Wilson
Personnel Director
Anderson Construction Company
3507 Rockville Pike
Rockville, MD 20895

Dear Mr. Wilson:

I read in the March 24th Washington Post classified section of your need for a Civil Engineer or Building Construction graduate for one of your Washington, DC, area sites. I will be returning to the Washington area after graduation in May and believe that I have the necessary credentials for the project.

I have worked at various levels in the construction industry every summer since the 8th grade. As you can see from my resume, I worked several summers as a general laborer, gradually moved up to a carpenter, and last summer I worked as assistant construction manager on a 100 million dollar job.

In addition to this practical experience, I will complete requirements for my Building Construction degree in May. As you may know, Virginia Tech is one of the few universities in the country that offers such a specialized degree for the construction industry. I am confident that my Building Construction degree, along with my years of construction industry experience, make me an excellent candidate for your job.

The Anderson Construction Company projects are familiar to me, and my aspiration is to work for a company that has your excellent reputation. I would welcome the opportunity to interview with you. I will be in the Washington area during the week of April 12th and would be available to speak with you at that time. In the next week to ten days I will contact you to answer any questions you may have.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,
(handwritten signature)
Steve Mason

Enclosure

Cover Letter Seeking Internships

2343 Blankinship Road
Blacksburg, VA 24060
(540) 555-2233
slgim@vt.edu

January 12, 2003

Ms. Sylvia Range
Special Programs Assistant
Marion County Family Court Wilderness Challenge
303 Center Street
Marion, VA 24560

Dear Ms. Range:

I am a junior at Virginia Tech, working toward my bachelor's degree in family and child development. I am seeking an internship for this summer 2003, and while researching opportunities in the field of criminal justice and law, I found that your program works with juvenile delinquents. I am writing to inquire about possible internship opportunities with the Marion County Family Court Wilderness Challenge.

My work background and coursework have supplied me with many skills and an understanding of dealing with the adolescent community; for example:

- I worked as a hotline assistant for a local intervention center. I counseled teenagers about personal concerns and referred them, when necessary, to appropriate professional services for additional help.
- I have been active at my university as a resident hall assistant, which requires me to establish rapport with fifty residents and advise them on personal matters, as well as university policies. In addition, I develop social and educational programs and activities each semester for up to 200 participants.

My enclosed resume provides additional details about my background.

I will be in the Marion area during my Spring break, March 3 - March 7. I will call you next week to see if it would be possible to meet with you in early March to discuss your program.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,
(handwritten signature)
Stacy Lee Gimble

Encl.