A cover letter is the “cover page” of your application. It is a one-page, three- to four-paragraph letter that introduces your application. Its content must be interesting and have conviction to convince the employer to read your resume.

It also serves as a writing sample for the employer. The employer uses your cover letter to assess the quality of your writing skills, especially for positions that involve writing-based responsibilities (anything from writing detailed reports to sending emails).

### Outline for Writing a Cover Letter

**OPENING PARAGRAPH – STATEMENT OF PURPOSE**
- Open with a captivating introductory sentence that grabs your reader’s attention and shows your enthusiasm for the position
- State your reason for contacting this company/organization
- Name the position you’re applying for and the department it is housed in
- State how you learned about the position

**MIDDLE PARAGRAPH(S) – EXPLANATION OF QUALIFICATIONS**

**Part 1: Why are you applying to this company/organization?**
- Write 1-2 sentences about the organization’s purpose and/or goals
- Write 1-2 sentences about the position (and how it relates or contributes to aforementioned purpose/goals)

**Part 2: What makes you a good candidate for the position?**
- To help get you started: Try making 2 columns first. List your skills in the left column and explain why they’re relevant in the right column
- Why are you interested in the position/ type of work
- List your relevant skills (not formal experience/ positions) and how they will allow you to effectively carry out the responsibilities listed in the job description

**CLOSING PARAGRAPH – CONCLUSION**
- Begin paragraph with one or two strong lines that summarize why you are an excellent candidate for the position
- Only if the application explicitly requires you to provide times you are available to interview, your class schedule, or any other availability/scheduling information, include it here
- Thank the reader for their time and consideration and express your enthusiasm to meet with them in the near future to discuss the opportunity and why you are a good candidate
- Careful with wording: you don’t want to be overconfident by conveying that you expect an interview, but instead you want to be assertive by letting the hiring manager know you want to meet with them to discuss why you are a good candidate

### Checklist

- Contains no spelling or grammatical errors
- Does not exceed one page
- Clearly states what I’m applying for and how I heard about it
- Focuses on my skills relevant to the position
- Demonstrates I’ve researched the employer and/or position I’m applying for
- Is addressed to the hiring manager (or selection committee)
- Has minimal usage of “I” statements
- Is a good reflection of my writing abilities

### Writing Tips

**Do not restate the experience on your resume**
While your resume lists your experience and positions, your cover letter is a personal testament of how your skills make you a good fit for the position. Tailor your skills to the responsibilities that the job description emphasizes.

**Address your letter to the hiring manager**
Research the hiring manager’s name and position in the organization to personalize your letter. If you can’t find information on the hiring manager, address your letter to “Selection Committee.”

**Focus on the employer**
Introduce the organization and/or the position to show that you’re passionate about working for them and that you’ve done your research. Minimize “I” statements. Your cover letter’s objective is to convince the hiring manager that hiring you would benefit the organization.
Cover Letter Samples

Samples of these and other cover letters can be found at careers.ucsc.edu

Open your cover letter with an interesting introductory sentence that hooks the hiring manager’s attention and displays your enthusiasm for applying.

In the middle paragraph(s), discuss the organization’s purpose and/or mission and how the position you are applying for fits in with it. In doing so, show the hiring manager that you have done more than just surface research on the organization—talk about them with insight and in a way that brings meaning to what they do.

Begin your concluding paragraph with one or two sentences that strongly summarize your qualifications for the position. The most effective wrap-up sentences integrate your skills, experience, and vision for the position.

Be sure to clearly state the position you are applying for and how you heard about it in your first paragraph.

The cover letter is a personal appeal of how your skills match the needs of the organization and the responsibilities of the organization. You may draw on both your functional skills (e.g., detail-oriented, interpersonal communication) and the skills gained from your experiences.

Conclude your final paragraph by thanking the hiring manager for reading your letter and with an assertive (yet not overconfident) statement expressing your interest in speaking with them about the opportunity directly in person.