# Writing an Effective Cover Letter

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Introduction and Tips

What is a Cover Letter?

It is a letter of introduction that highlights your key accomplishments and qualifications for a specific job opening.

What is a Letter of Inquiry?

It is a cover letter that inquires about potential internship or job opportunities within a specific company/organization.

Cover Letter Tips

- Make a good first impression. The cover letter is the first contact you will have with a potential employer. If it is well written, your letter will lead the reader to your resume. If your letter is poorly written or produced, the employer may not even take time to review your resume.

- Put yourself in the shoes of the hiring manager. If you were doing the hiring, what attributes would the ideal candidate for this job possess? The perfect candidate would demonstrate interest in and knowledge of your particular company or organization.

- Present yourself as the perfect candidate. Imagine your cover letter as a marketing tool, much like a television commercial. Effective commercials catch your attention by highlighting only the most attractive features of a product.

- Be brief. You should avoid detailing your entire work history. The best way to distinguish yourself is to highlight one or two of your accomplishments or abilities that show you are an above-average candidate for the position. Stressing only a few unique attributes increases your chances of being remembered by the recruiter and getting to the interview stage where you can elaborate on the rest of your accomplishments.

- Researching each employer promises to be much more effective than sending out hundreds of cover letters and resumes. In effect you are saying to employers, “This is where I want to work. I have done my research and I am confident in my decision.”

- Never send out a resume without a cover letter.

- Address your cover letter specifically to the person by name and title who will most likely be interviewing for the job you have in mind.
  - Call Human Resources to ask for this information.
  - If you are answering a blind advertisement- one in which the employer is not specified- you can address your letter “Dear Search Committee”, “Dear Human Resources” or “Dear Hiring Manager.”
  - Avoid writing “To Whom It May Concern.”
• The cover letter should be neat, contain no typos, misspellings or errors in grammar. Employers judge you on your ability to communicate and your ability to manage the presentation of information; a cover letter does both.

• Use 8 1/2 x 11 paper allowing a border of at least one inch. This allows space for the reader to make notes.

• Use the same quality paper as your resume. Use a matching envelope as well.

• Use the same font as your resume. Use a clear type face large enough to allow easy reading. Avoid script and other exotic fonts.

• Individualize your cover letter. Each cover letter you write will have a somewhat different slant, depending on what skills are important to the needs of the particular employer.
  • Whenever possible do some research on the organization or company before you write your cover letter.
  • Read annual reports, product brochures or contact people in the organization. Keep it to four or five paragraphs but no longer than one page.

• Always close your cover letter with a request for an interview.
  • “I am eager to discuss this opportunity with you further in an interview.”
  • You can also suggest a specific time or reason, such as: “I will call you the week of May 22nd to discuss the interviewing process and your timetable for hiring.”

• Make a record and keep a copy of each letter and resume you send.

• When emailing your cover letter and resume, state the position you are applying for in the subject line. You can write your cover letter directly into your email message and attach your resume. Or, if you prefer, you can attach both your resume and cover letter. If you decide to do the later be sure to write a professional email message indicating your interest in the position and that you have attached your cover letter and resume for consideration.
Cover Letter Guidelines

Your Address

Date

Contact Person’s Name
Title
Name of Organization
Address
City, State and Zip Code

Dear Dr./Mr./Ms.__________________________:

Section 1: Position Title / How did I learn about this opportunity
The opening paragraph explains why you are writing the letter. State your purpose, identifying the position you are applying for and how you learned about the opening. If you are responding to an advertisement, state the name and date of the publication where you saw the advertisement. If a well-respected person referred you to the organization, mention the person’s name and briefly explain your connection.

Section 2: “It’s All about Me “/ Selling my Skills!
Here is where you tailor your cover letter to a particular job. Tell the employer why you are a strong candidate for this position by highlighting relevant achievements, skills, and/or experience. A good way to approach this is to select 2-3 skills and/or experiences that directly relate to the position. If you are changing careers, emphasize your transferable skills. Show how your past experience has contributed to making you a strong contender in your new field.

Section 3: “It’s all about the Employer” / Do my Research!
To demonstrate your motivation, we suggest researching the organization and including your findings in the cover letter. This can include highlighting your interest in the company’s mission, special projects, programs or recent news highlights. Two or three sentences about the company is sufficient.

Additionally, this paragraph can be included if there is further information that adds strength to your qualifications and has not been mentioned on your resume or needs to be described in more detail (for example, a special project you undertook in a previous job or in your community).

Section 4: Closing Paragraph / Ask for an interview and Leave my Telephone/Cell Number(s)
Employers will not automatically contact you once you have sent your cover letter and resume, so be sure to state how and when they may contact you (including phone number and email address). The final paragraph can be action oriented (request an interview). Finally, thank the person for considering your candidacy and mention that you are looking forward to meeting him or her.

Sincerely,

Your signature (if sent by mail)

Your full name (typed)

Enclosure: Resume
Letter of Inquiry Guidelines

Your Address

Date

Contact Person’s Name
Title
Name of Organization
Address
City, State Zip Code

Dear Dr./Mr./Ms.__________________________:

Section 1

Briefly introduce yourself and indicate that you are inquiring about the availability of an internship or job. Mention how you identified their organization and why you are interested in their organization.

Section 2

Tell the employer why you would be a strong candidate for a position within their organization by highlighting relevant achievements, skills, and/or experience(s).

Section 3

This paragraph can be included if there is further information that adds strength to your qualifications and has not been mentioned on your resume or needs to be described in more detail (for example, a special project you undertook in a previous job or in your community).

Section 4

Reference your enclosed/attached resume that highlights your experience. State when and how you may be reached (including phone number and email address) if they have questions about your application. Mention that you will follow up with them to see if they have any anticipated vacancies and how your skills can benefit their organization. Finally, thank the person for their time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Your signature (if sent by mail)

Your full name (typed)

Enclosure: Resume
April 12, 2018

Mr. James Smith  
Director of Human Resources  
John Adams Financial Services  
12 Park Plaza, Suite 2100  
Boston, MA 02101

Dear Mr. Smith:

Recently I met with Jane Edison from the Finance Department of John Adams Financial Services at the Bridgewater State University Job & Internship Fair. She recommended that I submit my resume for the position of Financial Services Representative. Knowing the requirements of the position, she suggested I would be an ideal candidate for your consideration.

While attending Bridgewater State University full-time and working 25 – 30 hours per week, I have sought experience in my field of interest by completing an internship last summer with State Street in Fund Administration. This experience allowed me to shadow professionals in the field, process fund share transactions, review security pricing information for accuracy and completion, and prepare and proof account balance sheets and financial statements independently. The complexity of the internship required careful attention to detail and helped connect the concepts learned in the classroom to real world work.

In addition to my internship experience, I have worked for the past four years as a bank teller at HarborOne Bank in Bridgewater, MA. This experience has provided me with a strong background in customer service and the retail banking industry. In this role, I currently interact with up to 200 customers daily, providing efficient and friendly service. I frequently troubleshoot client financial concerns and provide in-house resources in consultation with my fellow coworkers. My hard work at HarborOne was recognized through a promotion to a supervisory role, where I manage 3 – 4 coworkers and verify all cash drawers during my shifts. These experiences as well as my coursework in finance and accounting make me an excellent candidate for this position.

As I was conducting research on your website, I was impressed to learn of your company’s commitment to community involvement. Throughout my undergraduate career, I made it a priority to be involved in community service projects, alternative break trips, as well as my six years of involvement with the Boys and Girls Club of Brockton. I look forward to the opportunity to work with a company that excels in its field and gives back to its community.

Attached you will find a copy of my resume highlighting in detail my education and work history. I would like to meet with you for an interview appointment at your earliest convenience. Please feel free to contact me at (700) 000-0000 or bsustudent@bridgew.edu if you need any further information regarding my candidacy. Thank you for your time and consideration and I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Your Signature

Name
131 Summer Street  
Bridgewater, MA 02325

April 14, 2018

Ms. Melissa Stephens  
Human Resources Director  
Community Care Family Services  
111 Main Street  
Norwood, MA 02062

Dear Ms. Stephens:

I am very interested in Community Care Family Services’ advertised position of Mental Health Counselor, which I learned about through the Career Services Office at Bridgewater State University. Please find my resume attached for your consideration.

Through my work in a mental health setting and successful completion of four years of related coursework, I am confident that I will succeed in the position of Mental Health Counselor. As a life skills counselor at Bridgewater State Hospital, I instructed patients on proper personal hygiene and organized recreational and educational activities. In addition, I observed individual and group therapy sessions and supported both medical and correctional staff.

Currently, I am working in the Girls Secure Detention Unit at the Old Colony YMCA where I provide a secure environment for twenty-two residents, ages 11 – 18. On a daily basis I assist residents in developing important life skills and I serve as a positive role model. This position allows me to further develop my counseling and interpersonal communication skills. In addition to participating in coursework focusing on child welfare and group counseling, I am certified in CPR and have completed two self-defense courses.

As I was researching Community Care Family Services, I was impressed with the variety of programs that you provide to the local community, such as your Children’s Therapeutic Day Activity Program. Because of my current work with at-risk youth, I am excited about the opportunity to work with your after-school program which provides excellent mentorship opportunities to this population.

I welcome the opportunity to speak with you in person about my qualifications for the Mental Health Counselor position. Please feel free to call me at (700) 000-0000 or contact me via email at bsustudent@bridgew.edu if you have any questions about my candidacy. I can be easily reached every weekday after 3:00 pm. I appreciate your time and consideration. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Your Signature

Name
March 14, 2018

Human Resources
Taunton Public Schools
215 Harris Street
Taunton, MA 02780

Dear Human Resource Manager:

Please accept this letter in application for the Special Education Teacher opening at the James L. Mulcahey Elementary School which I learned about on SchoolSpring.com. I strongly believe in equal access to education and I am excited to utilize my passion, skills, and experiences in making a difference within the Taunton Public Schools.

As a teacher, my goal is to facilitate inclusive learning for each student in my classroom. I am confident that my student teaching and volunteerism have provided me with the skills to do so. Currently, I am student teaching in a first grade inclusive classroom with 20 students in Randolph, a diverse and multilingual setting. I regularly review students’ Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) with my supervising teacher and differentiate instruction to meet the needs of students with autism and ADHD, as well as language delays and physical disabilities. Recently, I developed a unit that incorporated manipulatives, visual aids, and technology to teach students about the life cycle of butterflies. In addition to my formal classroom experience, I also work as a tutor in the Academic Achievement Center on campus. Tutoring students one-on-one and in small groups has further developed my ability to break down concepts and assess learning. These experiences will prepare me well for meeting the diverse needs of students at the Mulcahey School.

Since 2014, I have volunteered every summer with Camp Shriver, an inclusive, sports-oriented day camp for children with intellectual disabilities. As a camp counselor, I developed and facilitated games and activities to engage children, ages 8 – 12. One of the highlights of this experience was the rapport I developed with my campers and their parents. At the end of each summer, I received a number of cards from families thanking me for my compassion, patience, and enthusiasm when working with their children. I believe these qualities are essential in creating a welcoming and learning-conducive environment for students and I am excited to apply them in this position.

There are many reasons why I want to work for the Taunton Public School district but on the top of my list is the level of innovation that the Mulcahey School has shown in developing programs for all students to grow. I recently read about the STEM Career Fair which offered interactive activities for each grade level to learn about career options for their future. This type of program can motivate and inspire the special education student with low self-esteem to strive for more. That is the type of school culture I admire and would love to work within.

I hope you see the potential that I can bring to this position and the Taunton Public School district. If you have any questions regarding my candidacy, please feel free to contact me at bsustudent@student.bridgew.edu or 700-000-0000. Thank you in advance for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Your Signature

Name

Enclosed: Resume and Letters of Recommendation
My Street Address
City, State Zip Code

May 1, 2018

Dr. Ed Science
Laboratory Supervisor
Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection
One Winter Street
Boston, MA 02108

Dear Dr. Science:

I am very excited to apply for the Science Research Summer Internship position at the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP) that was listed on the Bridgewater State University Career Services internship database. I believe this opportunity would provide the practical experience I am seeking to further develop the skills that I have gained through my coursework and laboratory experience.

My laboratory experience in chemistry, biology and geology, as well as my courses in geochemistry, biochemistry, instrumental analysis and quantitative chemical analysis will prove to be useful for interning at the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection. As part of my academic lab work, I have performed chemical reactions and am currently using microscopes to observe specimens. I have also had the opportunity to conduct outdoor labs to assess water chemistry.

I was very impressed to learn that the MassDEP was in the top three for the “Most Green” organizations in the Commonwealth. It would be a terrific experience to intern at such a renowned department and learn from experts in the STEM field.

I would like to meet with you for an interview at your convenience. If you have any questions regarding my candidacy, you can reach me at (508)555-1234 or via email at name@email.edu. Thank you in advance for your consideration for this wonderful internship opportunity.

Sincerely,

Your Signature

Name
April 15, 2018

Emily Heffernan  
Director  
Massachusetts Migrant Education Program  
201 Washington Street  
Taunton, MA 02780

Dear Ms. Heffernan:

I am writing to inquire about the possibility of participating in an internship with the Massachusetts Migrant Education Program. I learned about your organization while exploring Idealist.org and I am very interested in your program’s work.

In the past two years, through volunteer work and in the classroom, I have had the opportunity to learn about the issues that often impact migrant populations. Last March, I was involved in an alternative spring break trip to Washington, D.C. During this community service project, I helped prepare food at a soup kitchen and visited a support center for immigrants to coordinate fun activities for children.

To supplement these hands-on experiences, I have also participated in relevant courses including Introduction to Intercultural Communication, Global Human Issues, and Social Inequality. Last year, in my Social Inequality class, I received an “A” for a research paper titled “Problems Impacting Migrant Workers in New England Farming Communities.” In addition, I have taken advanced Spanish classes, am highly proficient in the language and am prepared to translate for your Mexican and Spanish clients.

I am currently exploring career options that include serving migrant and/or immigrant populations. I am very interested in the broad range of services you offer in the Taunton area, including assisting families with pre-school enrollment and providing family literacy programming. I believe that an internship with MMEP will provide me with valuable practical experience as well as help me explore opportunities in the field.

I will call you next week to discuss the possibility of developing an internship for Fall 2017. If you would like to contact me before that time, I can be reached at (700) 000-0000 or via email at bsustudent@bridgew.edu. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Your Signature

Name