

UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND ALUMNI ASSOCIATION

COVER LETTER GUIDE



ALUMNI
ASSOCIATION

INTRODUCTION

Your cover letter is a crucial step in the application process. It introduces to the hiring manager who you are, what you can offer to the company and why you want the job. You have to accomplish all of this in one page, while leaving the hiring manager wanting more, in the form of an interview. Follow this guide to learn how to tailor the **look and feel** of your cover letter to stand out and land you more interviews in today's challenging job market.

THE BASICS

Keep your cover letter to one page:

- You should be expanding upon your resume, but not so much that you have nothing to discuss in your interview.

Write a unique cover letter for each job:

- You can follow a format (like the one on the following page), but steer clear of copying and pasting.

Mix your passion with your performance:

- Unlike a resume, your cover letter can include more passion and personality. Think of your resume as the quantitative and the cover letter as the qualitative part of your application (but be sure to still include numbers).
 - Highlight your soft skills, which otherwise might not come through on a resume.
 - Provide context and examples based on bullet points on your resume.



SAMPLE COVER LETTER

contact information

[Your Name]

[Your Contact Information]

[Today's Date]

[Hiring Managers Name]
[Hiring Managers Title]
[Company Address]
[Company Address Cont.]

Include information that you would otherwise formally include while addressing a letter.

- First and last name of hiring manager
- Their title
- Company name
- Company address

salutation

Dear [Appropriate Title and Name],

Address your cover letter to the hiring manager directly. If you don't have that information, try:

- The organization, ex. "Dear Salesforce Team and staff,"
- The team you'd be working on, ex. "Dear Data Management Team,"
- The organization leader or head of the department
- If none of the above information is available, use "Dear Hiring Manager"

introduction

Common Example: Please accept this letter as my enthusiastic interest to serve as the {title of position} at {company name}. I am confident that my experience as {name your most recent or relevant job title and a few industry-specific skills you have as it relates to the job}.*

body

Common Example: My experience in [what you've done in the past] has laid the foundation for me to [do what you're hoping to do next] at [company's name].*

conclusion

Common Example: As [name of organization] strives to [mission or vision], I believe I am best fit to lead as the [title of position]. In this role, I will provide [pull out one or two key skills or strategies you will implement as it relates to the job description]. I look forward to discussing further with you my vision to [restate key needs as it relates to the position].*

*see next page for details

sign-off

Sincerely,

[Name]

3 MAIN PARAGRAPHS



Introduction:

Traditionally, the introduction should include formal recognition of the position you're applying to and a brief two to three sentence description of your work experience and fit with the position.

If you want to make sure your cover letter stands out, be sure to hook the reader with one of the following themes:

- **Passion:** Share an anecdote of why you're passionate about this company, industry or job.
- **Love of the company:** Discuss a distinct moment or fact that relates to your love of the company, and be sure it is accurate.
- **Humor:** Be careful with humor, but if you are confident a playful opening line would fit the company's culture, give it a try.
- **Accomplishment or accolade:** Note a recent accomplishment, award, event success, promotion, etc. as it relates to the job.



Body:

The body paragraph should include concrete examples and accolades from your professional experience as it relates to the position description.

- Expand upon bullet points from your resume. Think:
 - What approach did you take to tackling one of the responsibilities you've mentioned on your resume?
 - What details would you include if you were giving the reader a glimpse into how you accomplished that bullet point?
 - What about your personality, passion or work ethic made you especially good at getting the job done?
- Showcase your skills.
 - Use this space to directly align your skills with what the hiring manager is looking for.
 - If you don't have the *exact* skills they're looking for, talk through transferable skills.



Conclusion:

- Finish strong with a call to action.
 - Use these last two to three sentences to remind the reader why they want to bring you in for an interview.
- Connect to the organization's mission statement.
- Reaffirm one or two skills/professional assets you bring and what you'd do in the role.
- Relay passion and excitement (modestly).

RESOURCES

Your Alumni Association is here to help you at any stage of your professional journey. Check out our **Alumni Association career resources** and some exclusive tips from Terps with years of experience in the industry.

Kecia Hansard '89, Associate Director, Career and Professional Development at American University

"Be sure that your contact information is on the cover letter as well (email/telephone). The recruiter or hiring manager always could use an extra touch point for how to reach out when necessary."



Chad Ellsworth, '04, Author, Coach and Speaker with Caped Coaching, LLC

"Try to include information you learn from informational interviews, such as, "One of the things that stood out to me from my conversation with FirstName LastName, Title at Organization, was..." This is a way to show that you went above and beyond web research in learning more about the organization, and is a great way to stand out."

Want more content like this? Check out our other Terp Career Guides [here](#).