
University Advising & Career Center

University of New Hampshire • 102 Hood House • Durham, NH • 603-862-2064 • www.unh.edu/uacc

Cover Letters

In most situations, it is essential to send a cover letter with your resume to potential employers. There are a few exceptions, such as when you hand out your resume at job fairs or when you take your resume to an in-person meeting with an employer. A good cover letter should accomplish three things: 1) Explain your interest in the position. 2) Give the reader a reason to be interested in you. 3) Serve as the groundwork for further contact.

By developing transferable skill and achievement oriented letters, you will gain a competitive edge. Not only does the cover letter let you highlight your special qualifications and enthusiasm for a specific job and the organization, but it also gives the employer an idea of your written communication skills. Your letter needs to show the employer what you can do for the organization and why they should select you.

Some general tips:

- Cover letters are not long. Consider a half-page best, three to four paragraphs, between 200 – 300 words.
- All cover letters should be individually created for a specific job.
- Single-space your letters and put them in business letter format (Word has a letter template).
- Center your letter on the page so top and bottom margins are equal.
- Use simple, direct language and correct grammar.
- Letters should be flawless—no typos or spelling errors – using spell check is not enough, read it out loud!
- When printing, use high-quality, white or off-white paper that matches your resume paper.
- Keep a copy of your letters for future reference and to keep track of where you applied.

Although each cover letter needs to be individually developed for each position you are applying for, a standard outline can help you organize the information you should include. The following cover letter outline can be tailored to a variety of job search situations:

In the First Paragraph, state why you are writing the employer. If you are applying for a specific job opening, name the position and how you learned of it (e.g., from someone known mutually to you and the employer, from a University Advising and Career Center (UACC) posting, a newspaper ad, web listing, directory, etc.). Insert a brief sentence that gives your degree, major, college affiliation, and graduation date.

Example: I read with great interest your posting for Communications Specialist on the University of New Hampshire (UNH) Jobline website. As a recent UNH graduate in the field of Communication, I found your opening particularly appealing and have enclosed my resume for your consideration.

In the Middle Paragraph, using your education, experience, and personal skills, show what makes you a good match for the position. Be specific, offering proof of your experiences. Clearly describe ways you will contribute. After carefully reading the job description, outline one or two specific examples of how your skills and experiences will fit the company's needs. Take note of buzz words and industry specific language used in the job posting and try to relate the job requirements to your experiences. You will want to highlight particular accomplishments relating to the position for which you are applying. Refer to your enclosed resume, but don't repeat information from your resume in exactly the same way.

Explain why you want the job. You should be able to answer the question – why do I want to work here? Ask yourself how the position fits into your overall career plans and what you find exciting about the particular profession. Also refer to the organization you are applying to, and speak to what it is about them and the job opportunity that appeals to you. Emphasize your knowledge of the organization (from your research efforts) and

your familiarity with the field. A genuine show of enthusiasm and knowledge will set you apart from those sending generic form letters.

Example: *My communications experience, gained through internships and summer employment, has provided me with the qualifications you are seeking. Specifically, I have strong writing skills, having produced numerous press releases and newsletter articles. In addition, I have coordinated several complex projects, both on the job and as part of my academic work. I am familiar with [company] and admire your firm’s strong track record in landing large clients in the environmental and health care fields - two areas which reflect my own interests, as you’ll see on my attached resume.*

In the Final Paragraph, always thank the employer for considering your application and say what you’ll be doing to follow up on your letter. An assertive statement explaining what you plan to do and what you hope the employer will do is harder to ignore than a vague request for consideration.

Example: *Thank you for considering me for this position. Please refer to my resume for further information on my background and skills. I will email you next week to schedule a time to meet. I look forward to speaking with you.*

Salary Statements:

Steer clear of stating salary requirements in the resume or cover letter. If a salary statement is required, you will want to research the industry and position salary norms. Try www.salary.com or others listed on our website at <http://www.unh.edu/uacc/otherjoblinks.html> or contact UACC for the latest statistics.

Below are examples of words that can help you highlight your transferable and related skills and experiences:

Self-Descriptive Words		Action Words	
(Add personal qualities to the letter)		(Serve to convey an ambitious and a productive person)	
active	independent	accelerated	managed
adaptable	logical	adapted	motivated
aggressive	loyal	administered	organized
alert	mature	analyzed	originated
ambitious	methodical	approved	participated
analytical	objective	coordinated	performed
attentive	optimistic	conceived	planned
broad-minded	perceptive	conducted	pinpointed
conscientious	personable	completed	programmed
consistent	pleasant	controlled	proposed
constructive	positive	created	proved
creative	practical	delegated	provided
dependable	productive	developed	recommended
determined	proficient	demonstrated	reduced
diplomatic	realistic	directed	reinforced
disciplined	reliable	eliminated	reorganized
discrete	resourceful	established	revamped
economical	respectful	expanded	revised
efficient	self-reliant	expedited	reviewed
energetic	sense of humor	founded	scheduled
enterprising	sincere	generated	set up
enthusiastic	sophisticated	influenced	structured
extroverted	systematic	implemented	supervised
fair	talented		

Sample Cover Letter
Do Not Copy. Use Your Own Words!

Your Name Here
102 Hood House
Durham, NH 03824
603-862-2064

January 14, 2008

Robert Jones
Sales Manager
YYZ, Inc.
2234 Long Ridge Rd.
Stamford, CT 06457

Dear Mr. Jones:

I am writing to you at the suggestion of John Smith of Sales, Inc., who mentioned you currently had a position open for a Junior Marketing Associate. I am seeking an entry-level marketing position and am very interested in this position.

As you will see on my enclosed resume, I graduate in May with a BA in Communication from the University of New Hampshire. My education, coupled with my related experience, would make me a strong candidate for your position. For example, during the past two summers, I worked full-time for Smith, Inc., where I was a marketing intern. There, I learned how to write press releases, develop print collateral, and create an e-marketing campaign. I also interned last semester at Marketing Inc. where I helped develop a new consumer product launch strategy that resulted in a record-breaking number of sales leads. In both positions, I was able to work in a team environment with marketing professionals, and my enjoyment of creative and print communications grew. Based on my research, I know that you recently launched a new product. With my strong work ethic and enthusiasm I am confident my experience and skills can benefit your current sales strategy and ultimately your year-end numbers.

Please refer to my resume for additional details about my background. I will contact you within the next week to see if I can answer any questions about my skills and other qualifications for the position. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely yours,

Your Name Typed Here

Internship Cover Letters

Cover letters for internships typically display a different level of experience from letters for full-time jobs. However, you want to still demonstrate the knowledge, skills, and enthusiasm for the field that you will be trying out. Intern employers will value passion for their area almost as much as experience. Emphasize what you've learned from courses, projects, work, and your involvement in any organizations, clubs, or teams.

SAMPLE INTERNSHIP COVER LETTER (use your own words)

Your Name Here
102 Hood House
Durham NH 03824

October 14, 2007

Elizabeth Fisher
Homemakers of Strafford County
215 Rochester Hill Road
Rochester NH 03867

Dear Ms. Fisher:

I am applying for the Project Coordinator Assistant internship advertised at UNH's University Advising & Career Center. I am a junior Psychology major with an interest in architectural studies.

I am thrilled at the opportunity to work on Homemakers of Strafford County's adult community Master Plan, and I will benefit your organization. For example, I recently worked with a student team to design a town community center. Through this experience, I further developed my ability to combine aesthetics with functionality. Additionally, psychology courses and personal experience have widened my understanding of human behavior. "Adult Development and Aging" is, so far, my favorite course. I grew up in a multi-generational home where I witnessed the unique needs and issues of older adults. "Adult Development" provides the academic opportunity to study seniors. My resume also shows that I have first-hand interaction with elderly through work at a nursing home.

I have a strong work ethic; I am punctual, professional, and enthusiastic. I will call your office next week to arrange a meeting at your earliest convenience. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely yours,

Your Typed Name

Submitting Cover Letters/Resumes Using E-mail

If you are submitting your cover letter and resume via email, your cover letter can serve as the text of your email. We do recommend that you attach that same cover letter to your email along with your resume for printing purposes. At the end of your cover letter, be sure to refer the employer to your attached resume for more information about your qualifications. You should also include the name of the job you are applying for in your subject line so the employer knows what they are receiving and won't mistake your application for spam.

Updated 5/07