



# Cover Letter Guide

A cover letter is sent with a resume to introduce yourself to an employer. The purpose of the cover letter is to supplement your resume and demonstrate that you have the skills and experiences required in the job description. It is essential that a cover letter is well written as it also serves as a representation of your written communications skills. When you are applying for a specific position, you should have that position description in front of you while composing your cover letter to best tailor your skills and qualifications to the position.

## FORMATTING YOUR COVER LETTER:

- A cover letter should be 1 page in length with 3-4 single spaced paragraphs and formatted as a business letter.
- Use a block format for your cover letter to the left margin and do not indent your paragraphs. Double space between each paragraph.
- Begin with a one-inch margin on each side. You can expand the margins 1/2 inch if needed. Your font size should be between 10-12 point font, and the same font used on your resume.
- Include your contact information in the same header used on your resume. This helps the documents to match.
- Use the formal greeting "Dear" and address your contact as Mr., Ms., or Dr. and his/her last name followed by a colon. If the contact person's name is not listed on the position description, you may want to look on the website or call the organization to inquire who to address your application to. Your application materials are more likely to be reviewed if it is sent to a specific person. If you cannot find the person's contact information, address your letter to "Hiring Manager," "Search Committee" or "Human Resources."
- End your letter with "Sincerely," and include your name again at the bottom of the letter.
- If you are submitting your cover letter and resume via email, attach both as separate PDF documents to the email. In the body of the email, include a brief paragraph that states your intent and refers to the attached documents.

## TIPS FOR COVER LETTERS:

- If an employer specifically requests a cover letter as part of an application, be sure to include one. If a cover letter is not requested, then it is considered optional. You might include one if your reason for applying is not apparent or you want to highlight qualities and skills not strongly visible on your resume.
- Cover letters are an important part of your application and should always be free of grammar mistakes. Proofread your cover letter and do not solely rely on spell check. Some employers may eliminate candidates based on errors.
- Cover letters are meant to be concise and detail specific examples of how you have developed the desired qualifications for the position. You will need to write a different cover letter for each position in which you are applying. Personalize your cover letter by including something specific about the organization. (See our [Researching Employers and Industries](#) handout.)
- Make sure that your cover letter is a unique and personal document. It is a great idea to look at examples of cover letters but also important to make it your own.
- Use different sentence structures in your cover letter. Avoid beginning every sentence with "I."
- Focus on your strengths rather than your shortcomings.
- Avoid reiterating the information on your resume. Instead, expand on the information that is most relevant.
- Focus on how you can add value to the company and your skills rather than how the position would benefit you.
- Show enthusiasm for the position and the organization.

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

- Visit the CSE Career Center Resource Center to view our related books.
- Have your cover letter reviewed by a CSE Career Counselor. You can make a 30 minute appointment or stop by during Drop-In Advising and Career Counseling hours on Monday-Friday from 2-4pm in 105 Lind Hall. Bring a copy of the job description and your cover letter for a review. (paper copy only; no laptops).

## **CREATING YOUR COVER LETTER:**

Your full address  
City, State, and Zip Code  
(match formatting to your resume header)

Today's Date

First and Last Name of Employer  
Title of Employer  
Organization Name  
Full Address  
City, State, and Zip Code

Dear Mr./Ms. \_\_\_\_\_ :

### **Introductory Paragraph:**

In this paragraph, state the position you are applying for (the exact title) and how you heard about the position. Try to capture the employer's attention by mentioning specific information about the company and position and why you are interested in them. Demonstrate that you have done some research on the company. If you have a connection at the company, you may want to mention your connection to the organization or names of specific people within the organization that you have connections with. End your first paragraph with a brief overview of your qualifications that make you a good fit for the position and entice the employer to continue reading your cover letter.

### **Middle Paragraph(s):**

The middle paragraph is the body of your letter and can be split into two paragraphs based on the content. Focus on the needs of the employer and pull out skills and qualifications directly from the position description to elaborate on your most relevant experiences. Do not simply list your skills or qualifications. Instead, use specific examples (from previous jobs, internships, classes, activities, volunteering, projects, etc.) to describe when, where, and how you developed the desired qualifications. Demonstrate that you have done company research to convince the employer that you are the best fit for the position. Avoid reiterating your resume, but you may want to expand on the details or summarize some highlights from your resume.

### **Closing Paragraph:**

In the closing paragraph, restate your interest in the position and organization, and briefly summarize your qualifications. Indicate your interest in an interview. Unless you have been instructed otherwise, you may want to be proactive in indicating when and how you will follow up with the employer. Contacting an employer directly after submitting your application is advantageous because: 1) It demonstrates your interest in the position; 2) It allows you to ensure the employer received your application; 3) It helps discern where the employer is in the interview process. Thank the employer for his or her time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Your full name typed

## COVER LETTER SAMPLE:

It is essential that a cover letter addresses the qualifications of the position and why you are a good fit for the company. The letter below was written by Michael Anical (Resume Example on Pg. 7 of the Undergraduate Resume Guide) and is for the following job:

### Controls Engineer Job Description:

- Participate in product development initiatives for unit and system level controls
- Communicate with customers and provide solutions
- Develop and facilitate technical training classes and participate in seminars

### Job Qualifications:

- Bachelors degree in engineering discipline
- Experience with Pro-E and Excel
- Ability to manage multiple tasks
- Ability to function in a team environment

## Michael Anical

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Minneapolis, MN 55414

651-000-1212  
mechanical@umn.edu

September 14, 2016

Sandy Smith  
Lead Engineer  
A1 Engineering Inc.  
123 Engineering Parkway  
Minneapolis, MN 55455

Dear Ms. Smith:

I am very interested in the Controls Engineer position at A1 Engineering Inc. posted on the University of Minnesota's GoldPASS system. I would like to work for A1 Engineering Inc. because of your strong commitment to meeting the individual needs of clients and providing creative engineering solutions. My mechanical engineering experience combined with my teamwork skills, technical abilities, and customer service experience would make me an excellent fit for this position.

As a senior Mechanical Engineering student at the University of Minnesota-Twin Cities, I have had the opportunity to apply my technical skills through my senior design project, where along with three other students, I designed and built a Synthetic Jet. I took the lead with the design aspect of this project, which allowed me to become proficient with Pro-E. My technical and teamwork skills were enhanced by my engineering internship at XYZ Company, where I worked with a team of four to investigate and propose ways for the organization to save money on repairing equipment. We completed this task by assigning roles and keeping track of our progress through weekly meetings. At the end of the summer internship we presented our findings to our manager, and many of our suggestions were adapted by the company. As a Sales Associate at Office Company and through my role as a Community Advisor at the University of Minnesota-Twin Cities, I've gained valuable customer service experience. Whether I was assisting someone to find the right office supplies for their organization or helping a student who was having a difficult time adjusting to campus life, I made sure to listen and offer advice and solutions. I believe these experiences have prepared me to be a contributing member of the A1 Engineering Inc. team.

I would appreciate the opportunity to interview with A1 Engineering Inc. to further discuss my interest and qualifications for the Controls Engineering Position. My engineering and customer service experience along with my teamwork and technical skills would make me a great fit for your organization. I will contact you the week of September 22 to ensure you have received my application materials and discuss the possibility of an interview. Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions or would like more information. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Michael Anical

\*This cover letter is meant to be a sample and does not accurately reflect the full page format of a typical cover letter.