

# Writing a Cover Letter

Gershman Hall, Suite 309  
 phone: 215/717-6075  
[careerservices@uarts.edu](mailto:careerservices@uarts.edu)  
[www.uarts.edu/careers](http://www.uarts.edu/careers)  
 Elisa Seeherman, Director

## WHY YOU NEED A COVER LETTER

Your cover letter, like your resume, is another essential tool in the process of getting an interview for a job or internship. **Every time you submit your resume in consideration for a position, you should enclose a cover letter.** A good cover letter introduces your resume by presenting a quick summary of your skills and background for the employer to see. It's your first chance to describe why you are a qualified candidate and to convey your knowledge of the company and interest in the position. It also imparts a bit of your personality through your writing style.

Keep in mind that your cover letter has to be free of typos and other errors. So, don't rely on spell-check alone. Proofread it and ask another person to look it over to check for errors and to make sure that it reads well. The state of your cover letter may be the deciding factor as to whether or not you get invited for an interview.

## HOW TO FORMAT A COVER LETTER

### How to Address the Letter:

**Each cover letter should be personalized to the particular company or organization to which you are applying.** If a contact name is not provided in the position description, try to find out the name of the hiring or personnel manager by calling the company and asking. Confirm the correct spelling of the person's name and title at the same time. Then, address your cover letter to that person specifically. If you are applying to a blind ad (usually lists a post office box without a company name), address the letter to Dear Sir/Madam.

### How to Set Up the Letter:

**There is a relatively strict format for cover letters that you should use.** If you've never heard of an inside address or salutation (something you learn in a business writing class), you can review how to "Set Up The Page" at: [www.soyouwanna.com/site/syws/coverletter/coverletter.html](http://www.soyouwanna.com/site/syws/coverletter/coverletter.html). In composing your letter, follow a standard 3 or 4 paragraph format:

- **Introduction:** one paragraph
- **Body of the letter:** one to two paragraphs
- **Conclusion:** one paragraph

## What to Say in Your Letter:

### *1<sup>st</sup> Paragraph: Focus the Letter*

Tell the employer why you are writing (state title of the job-internship) and how you heard about the opening (position was listed with the Career Services Office; listed on a particular web site, etc.).

### *2<sup>nd</sup>/3<sup>rd</sup> Paragraph: Sell Yourself*

Personalize your letter by saying something that conveys your knowledge of the company and their work (you can find this kind of information on the company's website). Then state how you are qualified for the job or internship being advertised (relevant work or internship experience; computer or other skills that relate to the requirements of the position).

### *Last Paragraph: Close the Letter*

Ask for the opportunity to interview for the position. State that you are enclosing your resume and any visual samples or a headshot (if requested by the employer). List your contact information (current phone & e-mail) and/or indicate that you will follow-up with an e-mail or phone call to inquire about the status of your application. Thank the employer for considering your interest in their company - position.

Normally, the cover letter should be one page. Print it on bond paper if possible. Keep a copy of the letter to review before any interviews and bring with you.

For sample cover letters and a cover letter template, see: [jobsmart.org/tools/resume/clet-ex.cfm](http://jobsmart.org/tools/resume/clet-ex.cfm).

## E-MAILING A COVER LETTER

There are some differences between writing a cover letter that you are planning to mail versus one you plan to send by e-mail. For tips on writing a dynamic e-mail cover letter, see: [www.quintcareers.com/email\\_cover\\_letters.html](http://www.quintcareers.com/email_cover_letters.html).