



Cover Letter Guide

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General Cover Letter Tips

Think of a cover letter as a marketing tool; you use it to generate interest, convey information not explicitly communicated in the resume, and encourage the reader to get excited about your candidacy. The cover letter should succinctly articulate your interest and enthusiasm for both the company and specific position as well as demonstrate how your unique background, skills, and experiences make you an excellent fit for both the position and organization to which you are applying. This guide provides suggestions to assist your development of a targeted cover letter.

Formatting

- *Length:* One page
- *Font Style:* Times New Roman (use the same font style as your resume)
- *Text Size:*
 - Name, 16pt font
 - Major Section Headings, 12pt font
 - Text: 10.5pt font
- *Format:* All information is left justified; utilize returns between paragraphs (Tip: do not indent paragraphs)

Cover Letter Sections

- *Heading:* Copy and paste resume heading (name and contact information) to the top of cover letter (**Tip:** brand your application and seek consistency throughout your application documents)
- *Employer Information:* Include recruiter name, title, department, mailing address (**Tip:** utilize contact information provided in job/internship description; **Tip:** research employer web site for recruiter contact if not provided in application instructions)
- *Opening Paragraph:* Reference the employer, the specific job/internship to which you are applying and how you learned of the opportunity; discuss your education, relevant coursework; explain your interest and motivation to pursue this position (**Tip:** target the letter to the employer; **Tip:** discuss learning objectives for internship)
- *Key Accomplishment Paragraphs:* Include 2-3 middle paragraphs focused on a specific experience and/or skill (**Tip:** connect your experience to the employer and opportunity); discuss paid, volunteer, leadership, student organizations, classroom/course, and internship experiences (**Tip:** provide detailed examples and quantify information). Highlight a few specific experiences that demonstrate your capabilities. You want to connect your past job experiences—using specific examples—with the job and function for which you are applying. Your goal is to make it easy for the recruiter to understand why your passions, desires, and capabilities align with the role. Stylistically, you can choose to use bullet points for each core competency, and subsequently expound on the examples individually, OR you can use traditional paragraphs. Either way, be sure to connect these points with those in your opening paragraph.
- *Concluding Paragraph:* Restate your interest in the opportunity; include a follow-up statement when you will contact the employer (Tip: only insert a follow-up statement on applications that permit applicant follow-up and/or you have the employer contact information); end document with a thank you statement
- *Valediction/Close:* Sincerely, Your Name

Cover Letter Outline

Insert Resume Heading

Date of Application

Recruiter Name/Contact

Recruiter Contact Title/Department

Organization Name

Department Mailing Address

(Tip: utilize the employer contact information from the job/internship posting or research employer website to find hiring department's contact information)

Dear Recruiter First/Last Name *(Tip: recommended)* or Dear Sir or Madam (if unsure of recruiter contact):

Introductory Paragraph (3-5 sentences)

- Reference the employer and opportunity and how you learned about the position (website, networking, etc.)
- Discuss your University, major, year of study/grad date, and/or relevant coursework
- Consider why you are applying for the position and discuss your interest and motivation for the opportunity
- (Tip: review the posting and employers about us webpage for ideas)*
- For an internship, write about your learning objectives for the experience

Middle Paragraph(s) (3-5 sentences)

(Tip: write 2-3 multiple paragraphs with each focusing on a specific skill and/or experience)

(Tip: include a statement that connects your skills/experiences back to the position/employer)

- Review the job/internship posting and employer website and highlight your skills and past experiences that are the most applicable *(Tip: complete a SWOT Analysis)*
- Remember experiences can be paid, unpaid/volunteer, internships, academic coursework/programs, study abroad, leadership roles, student organizations, community programs, and/or military training
- Provide specific and detailed examples of your experiences and accomplishments
- Focus on your qualifications and transferability of skills if you have limited direct experience *(Tip: if you have limited previous experience for the position, discuss an experience where you learned new skills)*

Concluding Paragraph (3-4 sentences)

- Restate your interest in the position *(Tip: to show enthusiasm, e.g., I am excited about...)*
- When appropriate, add a follow-up statement; for example, I will contact you the week of Month/Day to follow-up on my application and address questions you may have. If you do not plan to follow-up on the application, include your contact information
- End document with a thank you/appreciation statement

Sincerely,

Your Name

Enclosure: Résumé

Tailoring Your Cover Letter to the Job

When writing a cover letter, you want to market your experiences, background, and skill set to the specific position to which you're applying. Depending on the position, you may pull from different areas of your academic, work, extracurricular, and athletic experiences that better target the skill sets and credentials most pertinent to that specific job or internship. The following sample is an internship description for a position at Jacobs Capitol.

Notice how Jane H. Doe, the student whose cover letter appears on the following page, draws a clear link between the skills/experiences detailed in the job description and her own academic background, skill set, and campus involvement. In doing so, Jane makes a clear case for her candidacy.

Sample Job Description

Job Title: Investment Banking Summer Analyst
Company Name: Jacob Capitol
Industry: Investment Banking
Description:

The Investment Banking Summer Analyst program provides the opportunity to gain exposure to a number of disciplines within investment banking. Interns will sharpen **financial analysis skills, develop an understanding of corporate markets and clients, and gain experience in corporate finance** and with investment banking products through on-the-job training. Within each group, Summer Analysts play a meaningful role in supporting internal and external clients. Job responsibilities may include: **conducting financial and market analysis used in new business development and transaction execution, preparing client presentations, working on financial models, and performing peer comparison analysis.** The overall goal of the program is for the intern to develop a solid understanding of our industry, organization and strategy. Assignments will be with one of our specific product or industry groups, with the opportunity to interact with other groups and disciplines throughout the investment bank. The internship program will run for approximately 10 weeks in the summer months. Interns are primarily placed at our headquarters in Chapel Hill, NC. We often offer our top Summer Analysts the opportunity to continue in full time positions in our Analyst program upon graduation.

Notice the skill sets that the position highlights.

Look for KEYWORDS – descriptive action verbs and adjectives defining the main responsibilities and qualifications of the position- in the job description and try to use them in the body of your cover letter.

Position Requirements:

- Completed junior year of a BA/BS degree with a scheduled graduation of December 2017 or May 2018
- Overall GPA of 3.0
- Proven **analytical ability and attention to detail**
- Solid **leadership and interpersonal skills**
- Superior **written and oral communication skills**
- Ability to work well in a **fast-paced, team oriented environment**
- Business major
- Prior completion of Accounting or Finance coursework
- High degree of academic and extracurricular achievement
- Willingness to commit substantial time and energy to the program

Contact: Michael Jacobs (please no phone calls)

Sample Cover Letter

JANE H. DOE

Jane_Doe@kenan-flagler.unc.edu
www.linkedin.com/JaneHDoe
1 (555) 555-5555

August 5, 20xx

Date Submit
Application

Brand letter by using your
same resume heading

Tell how you learned of
the opportunity

Mr. Michael Jacobs, Founder and CEO
Jacobs Capitol
307 W. Barbee Chapel Road
Chapel Hill, NC 27517

Personalize Letter
when possible

Reference
employer in
letter

Dear Mr. Jacobs:

I write to express my interest in the Investment Banking Summer Analyst Trainee program following your company information session at the Investment Banking Seminar Series for the UNC Finance Society. I am a senior at The University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill and will graduate in May 20xx with a degree in Business Administration with a concentration in Finance through the Kenan-Flagler Business School. I believe your Investment Banking Summer Analyst Trainee program will provide me with the knowledge and skills necessary to be a successful broker and to learn strategies for maximizing client returns while developing positive business relationships with customers.

Discuss your motivation

As the Business Analyst Intern at Merrill Lynch, I assisted senior bankers and client senior management in execution of a variety of capital markets transactions, primarily in the technology industry. I also designed integrated financial models to forecast financial growth, analyze pro forma effects of M&A activity, define capital raising scenarios, and value entities. In this role, I created several analysis including discounted cash flow, company comparable, and internal rate of return. My experience working with clients and senior management has equipped me with the analytical skills necessary to be a successful Investment Banking Analyst Trainee.

Connect experience back to employer

My experiences at UNC-Chapel Hill allowed me to develop several professional skills. During spring semester of 20xx, I was chosen to be the Finance & Assessment Committee Officer for the UNC Bonner Leaders Program out of 100 applicants. In this role, I supervised the Bonner Program's financials and developed an annual budget for funds totaling \$150K. I also evaluated 15+ grant proposals and distributed a total of \$25K in funding to the strongest applicants based on metrics. In addition, my interpersonal skills helped me work with 35 committee members to create a Bonner website and social media strategy that increased program involvement by 50%. I believe my experience successfully collaborating with a large committee and ensuring the integrity of the Bonner program will prove to be a strong asset with the customer service requirements of this position.

Show enthusiasm

Quantify achievements

I am excited about the prospect of becoming a part of the Jacobs Capitol team and learning from experienced professionals in the field. I am confident in my ability to make an immediate and lasting contribution to your organization and would welcome an interview at your earliest convenience. Thank you for considering my application, and I look forward to speaking with you soon.

End with appreciation

Sincerely,

Jane H. Doe

Jane H. Doe

Enclosure: Résumé

Cover Letter Sentence Starters

Because knowing what to say in a cover letter can be difficult, we've listed a number of "sentence starters" to aid you in matching your unique background, skill set and qualifications to the needs of the position and employer. Use these sentence starters as examples when drafting the three parts of your cover letter: the introduction, the body and the closing paragraph.

Introductory Paragraph

- "It is with great interest that I am applying for the position of _____."
- "(Name of contact) provided me with your name and suggested I contact you in reference to the _____ position."
- "As a recent graduate of North Carolina University at Chapel Hill with a degree in _____ and an avid (reader, writer, sports enthusiast, etc.), I believe I am a strong applicant for the position of _____."
- "As a (marketing, investment banking, real estate, etc.) intern with (name of organization) I gained valuable experience in _____ that makes me an ideal candidate for the position of _____."
- "Thank you for speaking with me on (date) and discussing the _____ position. I am very interested in _____."
- "Your organization impresses me because of (the performance of your product, the integrity of your support staff, its customer satisfaction, etc.)."

Middle Paragraphs

- "My experience as a _____ will help me to contribute _____."
- "Throughout my four years of undergraduate studies I have demonstrated skills and abilities that are exactly what the position of _____ demands."
- "I can contribute to your organization's effectiveness by _____."
- "My previous success in _____ has proven my ability to _____."
- "To highlight some of my accomplishments I have _____."
- "Working with _____ has strengthened and improved my (analytical, research, interpersonal, organizational, etc.) and (analytical, research, interpersonal, organizational, etc.) skills."
- "I am confident that I can be a valuable asset to your organization because _____."

Concluding Paragraph

- "I am eager to learn more about _____ and would like to discuss my qualifications and interests with you."
- "I am interested in the position and would appreciate the opportunity to discuss my background and your requirements in greater detail."
- "I feel that my _____ and _____ make me a strong candidate for this position, and therefore look forward to the possibility of employment with (name of organization)."
- "I would appreciate the opportunity to further discuss my qualifications with you. I can be reached at (phone number) or at _____."
- "I will contact you within (10 days, 1 week, etc.) to (verify my application materials are in order, introduce myself, inquire as to the next steps, etc.)."

We hope this Interview Preparation Guide has been helpful to you. If you have any constructive feedback as to how the UBP Career team can improve this resource, please share it via: ubpcareers@unc.edu.