



Guide to Writing a Cover Letter

A cover letter formally introduces you and your resume to an employer. It should reflect your best abilities, as it is often the first writing sample you will submit to an employer. Cover letters should reflect sound writing practices and promote your candidacy. You must communicate your value to a prospective organization in an understandable, brief, and positive way. The cover letter should be one page in length and should include three to four paragraphs. Although a cover letter is not always required, it is important to include a cover letter with every resume you send. Before you send your cover letter, be sure to proofread, checking for any grammatical or spelling errors. Here are some additional tips to keep in mind:

- Your letters are marketing tools that should address the need of employers and should inspire a desire to learn more about you.
- Always address your letters to a specific individual with his or her correct title and business address.
- Keep the letter to one page. Eliminate extraneous words and avoid rehashing material from your resume. Your cover letter should complement your resume, not repeat it word-for-word.
- Always keep your reader in mind. Make the letter easy to read and attractive.
- Tailor your letter for each employer. Generic, mass-produced letters are unprofessional.
- Show appreciation to the employer for considering your application and for granting you an interview.
- Avoid redundancy in your sentence structure. For example, don't start each sentence with "I". Vary your language throughout the letter to demonstrate strong, professional writing skills.

Addressing your Cover Letter

Address your cover letter to a specific contact person. Avoid "To whom it may concern" or "Dear Sir or Madam" whenever possible. Unsure where to find the contact person? Here are some helpful tips:

- If the job was posted in SJUcareers, check the right side of the posting for "Contact Information." Often, the recruiter's information will be listed in that section.
- Use CareerShift to identify the recruiter's information. CareerShift can be accessed through your SJUcareers account.
- Check the job posting to see if it is listed at the bottom or referred to at all.
- Call the employer and request the name of the hiring manager.
- Address the letter in this format: "Dear Ms./Mr. Last Name:" The use of the colon denotes professional communication.

Opening Paragraph

Open your cover letter by grabbing the reader's attention with your knowledge of the employer, industry, and specific job posting. If you were referred to the employer by someone, the opening paragraph is the best place for you to mention this. If you were not referred to the position by someone, state where you found the posting. This paragraph should convey your excitement about the employer or the position and answer the question as to why you have chosen to apply for this specific position. Research the employer prior to writing your cover letter so you can speak to your fit within the organization.

Example:

"During a recent conversation with Jill Jones regarding my career interests in both working with the homeless population and the innovative approach taken by Back of My Feet, she informed me of your search for a Program Director and suggested I apply. In both speaking with Ms. Jones and researching your organization, I was struck with the approach Back on My Feet takes in working with individuals in both a 1:1 and group format. This approach aligns with success I've seen in past professional experiences where support is both comprehensive and delivered using diverse approaches. The integration of physical fitness into the process can have a profound impact on mental health. I personally find joy in running, both by myself and with others, and can relate to the positive impact it has had on my own life."

Middle Paragraph(s)

This section should connect the dots between specific skills and/or experiences to those relevant to the potential employer's needs. Provide examples that showcase your skill set. Do not repeat word-for-word what is in your resume. Instead, think about proving a more in-depth look at what you have to offer. Cite achievements and qualifications related to the position. Take advantage of the space of a full page letter to present your related experience.

Example:

"My interest in the Program Director position stems from your mission to create and maintain programs benefiting community members who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless. While attending Saint Joseph's University, I volunteered with Back on My Feet throughout my junior year. This experience provided me with the opportunity to learn more about Back on My Feet and to see the mission in action solidifying my interest in pursuing opportunities to support the homeless population of Philadelphia. My skillset will help Back on My Feet meet organizationally-set goals. As a sociology major, I have engaged in conversation with peers about homelessness, its impact on the community as a whole, and the impact on the individual. Engaging with this topic in an educational space has allowed me to become comfortable talking about a hard subject and has also exposed me to varying viewpoints which exist about the homeless population, both positive and negative."

In addition to my knowledge-base, I will also bring strong organizational and leadership skills to this position. As a Community Partner Coordinator (CPC) during my junior and senior years at Saint Joseph's University, it was my main responsibility to act as a liaison between Saint Joseph's University and Project HOME. I coordinated volunteers, communicated with them to work out problems, and ensured that we were meeting the expectations of the organization. This position directly relates to the Program Director position, as one of the key duties of the role will be working with volunteers and coordinating their efforts. This position allowed me to develop leadership skills which I will utilize daily at Back of My Feet. During my time as CPC, I treated each volunteer as an individual with unique needs. When problems arose, volunteers felt comfortable coming to me to find solutions. I am proud to say that during my two years as a CPC, I had a 100% retention rate with volunteers from year-to-year."

Closing Paragraph

Use this paragraph to clearly state your interest in the position and thank the employer for their consideration of you as a candidate. Let the employer know of your plan to follow up with them. Provide information on how the employer can contact you to schedule an interview to discuss the open position and your qualifications.

Example:

"I welcome an opportunity to discuss the Program Director position and my interest in contributing to Back on My Feet's efforts. I will call you the week of October 11th to follow-up on my application. I can be reached at 123-456-7890 if you have any questions or would like to schedule an interview. Thank you for your time and consideration. I very much look forward to hearing from you."

Finished?

Review your cover letter to make sure it adheres to best practices and is ready for employers' eyes. After reviewing personally, get it reviewed by a Career Development staff member by:

- Stopping by during Drop In Hours: The most up-to-date hours are located on the Career Development Center website.
- E-mailing careerhelp@sju.edu for a review or critique
- Visiting the SJU Writing Center: Students are also welcome to visit the Writing Center for assistance with cover letters. Please visit their website at <https://sites.sju.edu/writingcenter/> for more information.

Sample Cover Letter 1:

1234 Hawk Lane
Apartment A
Philadelphia PA 19131

30 August 2016

Mr. John Doe
Executive Director
Back on My Feet, Philadelphia
100 South Broad Street
Philadelphia, PA 19110

Dear Mr. Doe:

During a recent conversation with Jill Jones regarding my career interests in both working with the homeless population and the innovative approach taken by Back of My Feet, she informed me of your search for a Program Director and suggested I apply. In both speaking with Ms. Jones and researching your organization, I was struck with the approach Back on My Feet takes in working with individuals in both a 1:1 and group format. This approach aligns with success I've seen in past professional experiences where support is both comprehensive and delivered using diverse approaches. The integration of physical fitness into the process can have a profound impact on mental health. I personally find joy in running, both by myself and with others, and can relate to the positive impact it has had on my own life.

My interest in the Program Director position stems from your mission to create and maintain programs benefiting community members who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless. While attending Saint Joseph's University, I volunteered with BoMF throughout my junior year. This experience provided me with the opportunity to learn more about BoMF and to see the mission in action. This experience solidified my interest in pursuing opportunities to support the homeless population of Philadelphia. Besides my inside knowledge of the organization, I believe my skillset will help BoMF meet organizationally-set goals. As a sociology major, I have engaged in conversation with peers about homelessness, its impact on the community as a whole and on the individual. Engaging with others about homelessness in an educational space has allowed me to become comfortable talking about a hard subject and has also exposed me to varying viewpoints which exist about the homeless population, both positive and negative.

I also bring strong organizational and leadership skills to this position. As a Community Partner Coordinator (CPC) for two years at Saint Joseph's University, I acted as a liaison between Saint Joseph's University and Project HOME. I coordinated volunteers, communicated with them to solve problems, and ensured that we were meeting the organization's expectations. This position directly relates to the Program Director position, as one of the key duties of the role is working with volunteers and coordinating their efforts. This position allowed me to develop leadership skills which I will utilize daily at BoMF. During my time as CPC, I treated each volunteer as an individual with unique needs. When problems arose, volunteers felt comfortable coming to me to find solutions. I am proud to say that during my two years as a CPC, I had a 100% retention rate with volunteers from year-to-year.

I welcome an opportunity to discuss the Program Director position and my interest in contributing to BoMF's efforts. I will call you the week of September 11th to follow-up on my application. I can be reached at 123-456-7890 if you have any questions or would like to schedule an interview. Thank you for your time and consideration. I very much look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Sarah Student

Sarah Student

Sample Cover Letter 2:

SJU Street, Apt. 1
Philadelphia, PA 19131

25 August 2016

Dr. Jane Doe
Intern Supervisor
Career Development Center
5100 City Avenue
Philadelphia, PA 19131

Dear Dr. Doe:

It is with great enthusiasm that I apply to the Marketing Intern position open in the Career Development Center. Having personal experience working with a career counselor on my own internship search gave me perspective on how the Career Development Center works with individual students to help us meet our career goals. The Marketing Intern position appeals to me because it gives me an opportunity to utilize my experience as both a marketing major and a student at Saint Joseph's University to help the Career Development Center reach as many students as possible. I see the value in the services the Career Development Center offers and hope to communicate that value to current students and alumni.

My qualifications are a result of both my coursework and my past internship experiences. In my marketing strategy class, I learned how to analyze an organization's marketing goals and initiatives for effectiveness, and after creating a SWOT analyses, identify where time needs to be spent to communicate with the audience more effectively. I hope to put this into practice as an intern with your office with the intention of creating and meeting S.M.A.R.T. goals around the marketing efforts of the office.

In my internship with Campus Philly I managed the marketing efforts for weekend events. During this experience, I created a content management calendar for social media communication, and used HootSuite Premium to execute the calendar. In my time at the internship, Twitter following increased by 12% and multiple posts had 200+ retweets. I also created print media for distribution on college campuses. I utilized Canva to create engaging, colorful, and informative posters. My supervisor remarked that the posters were visually appealing and I continually received positive feedback on them throughout my internship experience.

I am excited about the opportunity to contribute my background and experiences to the Career Development Center. I can be reached at (123)456-7890 to discuss my qualifications and will follow-up with you in two weeks. I look forward to discussing my skills with you in the form of an interview. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Iwanna Job

Iwanna Job

Enclosure: Resume

Sample Cover Letter 3:

1851 Founded Street
Philadelphia, PA 19131

23 September 2016

Jane Doe
Employment Specialist
University of Pennsylvania
PO Box 007
Philadelphia, PA 19101

Dear Ms. Doe:

Through information provided by the Career Development Center at Saint Joseph's University, it has come to my attention that The Perelman School of Medicine is seeking a Clinical Research Coordinator. The mission of the Perelman School of Medicine - to improve the health and well-being of people through research, education, clinical care and community service – speaks to the very reason I am pursuing a science degree at Saint Joseph's University. My experience working as a lab assistant over the course of the past two years has resulted in the development of the skills necessary to thrive in the Clinical Research Coordinator position

While working on my thesis, I wrote and submitted paperwork through IRB and received approval to conduct my own research. My thesis work provided me with experience working with limited supervision in a clinical setting and provided me with confidence to make decisions based on my experience and research. Conducting a study from beginning to end allowed me to be exposed to all aspects of the process – from the paperwork to recruiting and screening subjects, to the actual data collection. This project served as a capstone experience and solidified my desire to work in a lab setting professionally.

As a Division I Athlete on the Track & Field team, I have experience setting individual and team goals and creating a plan to meet the goals set. Involvement in athletics taught me how to manage my time efficiently to complete the goals set by the team as well as the academic goals I set for myself. While devoting 15 hours a week to my sport, I was able to maintain a 3.5 GPA and was named to the Dean's List each semester.

I am excited about the opportunity to work for The University of Pennsylvania. You will find my resume attached, which outlines my skills and experiences as they relate to the position. I will follow up with you in the next two weeks to see if I can answer any questions for you and look forward to the opportunity to communicate about how I can help you meet your needs.

Thank you for your consideration. I look forward to speaking to you.

Sincerely,

Joseph Hawk

Joseph Hawk