



John Carroll University

CENTER FOR CAREER SERVICES

Cover Letter Writing Guide

Cover Letter Writing Guide

What is the *Purpose* of a Cover Letter?

- Your cover letter is a way to expand on your skills, experience, and goals in a more personal way to recruiters or hiring managers.
- It gives you a chance to address your professional history and anything that may be unclear in a resume.
- A cover letter should complement your resume but it should not simply repeat your resume in paragraph form.
- Cover letters are typically required for any job application, but they can also be a great way to express interest in a company without there being an actual job opening (yet!).
- This guide is the perfect start to creating your first draft or editing your current cover letter-remember to create a new one for each job to which you are applying!

Where do I *Start*?

- **Would You Hire You?** Ask yourself what reasons will make you a great asset to the company you are applying to that go beyond simply listing the places you have worked. Use the job description to match your skills to the position.
- **Do Your Homework:** Thoroughly review the posted job description as well as the company website or other online sources. This will allow you to understand what they are looking for in terms of culture and values within the organization and see how your own values and skills complement them. For help using a job description in your cover letter, see page 3).
- **Stay Positive:** All contact with the organization should be positive. Avoid any negative language, even if intended to be framed positively. Examples include: 'never', 'no', 'not', etc. For examples of professional adjectives, see page 5).
- **Focus on the Employer's Goals and Interests:** Concentrate on how your skills align with the needs of the employer.

How do I *Format* my Cover Letter?

- **Start from Scratch:** Avoid templates and begin with a blank document.
- **Formatting:** Block is the accepted business letter format (shown in example on page 2). Remember to keep it clear, consistent, and professional.
- **Create a Flow:** Divide your letter into sections following the guide on page 2.
- **Font:** Use 10-12 pt in standard font, keeping it consistent with your resume font. The length should be no longer than one page.

See the following sample description for writing a cover letter including examples.

Your Name
Street Address
City, State, Zip Code

Font should be in 10-12 pt, black standard font and margins should be .5" -1" around.

Current Date (Always spell it out; i.e. January 1st, 2025)

Employer's Name, Title
Department or Division
Company/Organization Name
Company Address
Company City, State, Zip Code

Avoid using "Mrs." unless you are 100% certain that they prefer to be called that.

Dear Mr./Ms./Dr./ Name (If name is not known, use: Hiring Manager, Human Resources Manager, and Prospective Employer)

Paragraph 1: (Introduction): Concisely state why you are writing the cover letter, name the position which you are applying for, and how you heard about the opening in the organization. If someone referred you, here is where you can tell the reader who that was and how they are connected with the organization. This paragraph will probably only be two to three sentences long. You can also briefly mention your top reason for being interested in the position, which you can expand on in the following paragraphs.

One space between paragraphs only.

Paragraph 2 (Body): Tell the employer why you are interested in working for this organization and why they should be interested in you. Highlight one or two things in your experience that will best suit you for a position with this organization. This is where you "sell yourself" to the company using example statements. Use the organization or company's website and job description to draw correlations between your skills, education, and/or experience with the job. Think of this as your "qualifications section" and use the job description to further highlight why you believe you are the best candidate for the position. **On page 8, you will find a list of sample adjectives you can use to describe yourself or your work.** It would also be beneficial to use adjectives used in the job description. Keep in mind that all descriptive adjectives may not be appropriate to describe yourself. For example, it would not be appropriate to refer to yourself as *powerful*, but a project you have accomplished may have had a *powerful impact* on someone).

Paragraph 3 (Body): Here is where you can demonstrate your knowledge in the industry/field and draw correlations between your skills and the needs of the industry. **Show that you have done your research on the company.** This section can also be an opportunity to provide extra information that may set you apart from other candidates. Further, you can address certain potential issues that may appear on your resume, such as a gap in your work history if you choose to divulge reasons.

Paragraph 4 (Closing): Here you will briefly summarize your letter. Thank the employer for reviewing your credentials. Indicate your desire for an interview and specifically when and how you are going to contact the employer. Be sure to state when and where you can be reached.

Sincerely,

(**SIGN** your name here)

Your Name Typed

Avoid saying you are "Looking forward to speaking with them again." Instead, let them know how and when YOU will be contacting THEM.

No more than 4 spaces between.

Examples of how to integrate the Job Description into your Cover Letter:

JOB POSTING:

Case Manager

Impact Lives. Inspire Change. Be the Solution.

Since 1864, we've been an integral part of the Berea community, proudly rooted in faith and a legacy of serving children and families. While our roots remain in Berea, we've grown to support children and families statewide. OhioGuidestone is always looking for passionate people to make a difference in our communities. You can impact lives and inspire change right in your own backyard. Apply today to work at the largest non-profit, mental health service provider in Ohio. We offer FREE CEU trainings, a great support system, education bonuses and incentives, and much more! Full time employees may be eligible for Public Student Loan Forgiveness at OhioGuidestone and are also offered PAID medical benefits for you and your family! The Juvenile Justice department is seeking a passionate and excited individual to provide community-based services to a diverse clientele dealing with behavioral and mental health diagnosis. The Case Manager works diligently to engage resistant clients and coordinates a support and resource team around the entire family. This is a position that is focused **on [1.] treating the family, not an individual client. The individual selected plays a very important role as an advocate for children and families]**, often times within social service and educational settings.

Essential Functions:

- Develop and maintain a service relationship with youth and family.
- Develop service/treatment plan.
- Provide parents with information on disciplining, behavior management
- **[2. Household management and communication] and relationship enhancement**
- **Provide crisis intervention and mediation as necessary.**
- Coordinate, make referrals, or arrange for appropriate community resources when needed
- Ensure that children are in the proper educational setting.
- Maintains ongoing contacts (phone, meetings, and conferences) with other professionals
- Keeping contacts with **[3.] community resources/services].**
- Organization and maintenance of client information and case notes.
- Record keeping and copying of necessary information
- Participates in staff training, supervisory and staff meetings

Qualifications:

Bachelor's Degree in the social sciences/related field required

Focus on pulling both key words *and* concepts to truly capture what they are looking for and how you can meet their needs.

Notice the bolded verbiage in the description and see the corresponding phrases below that would be fantastic for a cover letter.

Examples:

- 1.) "One of the highlights of my position as a Behavioral Health Technician was my approach to **[treating not only the patients themselves, but their families as well]**. This was critical in their recovery because of the amount of stress that a family can take on in these circumstances."
- 2.) "My experience as a Resident Assistant has given me skills in both **[household management and communication]**."
- 3.) "To supplement my coursework in counseling, I volunteered at a community mental health center on a weekly basis **[to direct clients to various community resources and directed them to the necessarily services]** based on their needs."

Dwight Schrute
12345 Pioneer Trail Drive
North Royalton Ohio 44133

February 15, 2025

Michael Scott
Camp Director
Camp Wise
13164 Taylor Wells Road
Chardon, OH 44024

Here is a sample that illustrates common Cover Letter mistakes:

****The ~~strickthrough~~ represents the mistakes and the corrections will be [bracketed].**

Do not waste valuable space telling them things about their organization that they already know

Dear Mr. Scott:

I am writing this cover letter to share my interest in ~~working~~ for Camp Wise in the position of Program Area Supervisor. ~~Your approach to learning and service that seeks to meet the child where they are is something that resonates with me.~~ I learned of the position opening from John Carroll University's online Career Connections website and also in speaking with Jane Robertson, previous Volunteer Coordinator for Camp Wise, at the John Carroll University Career Fair held this past spring.

Avoid using phrases such as "I think" or "I believe" because they weaken your statement.

My interest in working as the Program Area Supervisor at ~~Camp Wise~~ stems from my desire to help grow outdoor programs for youth participants. I personally have been shaped by outdoor activity and camp life as an Eagle Scout of the Boy Scouts of America. I wish to give back to and work for similar programs that ~~helped me develop into the man I am today such as the youth development at Camp Wise.~~ The educational background I have ~~attained~~ will provide me a strong foundation of lesson planning that I can apply to program development for Camp Wise. ~~I believe~~ [My] qualifications as a Graduate Assistant in working with the athletic department's upper management, and in working with student athletes on a day to day basis will be critical in collaborating with the ~~best in the business~~ [campers and staff members of Camp Wise].

Avoid over-flattering or dramatic language like this.

My prior experience working with Camp Wise's facilities and grounds through the Shaker Heights Middle School Physical Education Camp will help me to implement prior planning and activities that I have overseen in the past. My work at Beat the Streets Cleveland as Chief Executive Officer helped me to learn to interact with staff members in meeting settings as well as organize volunteers and direct structured programming. My wrestling career taught me dedication and time management and it developed my commitment to academic excellence. This lead to my undergraduate degree in Education and soon, my Masters in Nonprofit Administration. ~~My whole life has lead me towards working for a nonprofit organization such as Camp Wise.~~ The ability to influence young lives through camping and outdoor activities from an administrative role is something that ~~my whole life has prepared me for~~ [I am truly passionate about].

Avoid overly passionate or emotional language.

I would like to thank you for taking the time to read over my credentials and I ~~would be thrilled~~ [hope] to meet in person or speak over the phone about the available position of Program Area Supervisor. I ~~look forward to hearing from you~~ [I will follow up with an email to you by the end of this week to touch base regarding the application process]. Thank you for your time and consideration.

It is okay to be direct in regards to the next steps and be more assertive!

Sincerely,



Dwight Schrute

Sally Hansen
1 University Way
University Heights, OH 44118

**Here is a sample Cover Letter
that is in response to a
fulltime job ad:**

January 1, 2017

Patrick Star, Recruiter
Human Resources
Ohio Guidestone
123 Main St.
University Heights, OH 44118

Dear Mr. Star:

I am writing in response to the Case Manager position that I am interested in at Ohio Guidestone. I learned of this opening through Dr. Smith, a previous counselor at your agency. I look forward to completing my degree in Psychology this upcoming spring and my internship as a Behavioral Health Technician, as well as my expansive volunteer experience working with children and families, would make me a great candidate for this position.

The person-centered approach is a method that I am confident using and that has been the most effective in my work as a Behavioral Health Technician at the Cleveland Clinic. As my enclosed resume indicates, I have research experience in the client-centered approach while having been supervised by experts in the field. It is clear that your organization strives to honor its commitment to service in the community and my similar dedication to several volunteering positions has provided me with the organizational skills and passion necessary to contribute to that very mission.

I have experience working directly with patients and families, including coordinating care requirements and routines and providing support to families that are involved with the patients. This is a skill that has become an integral part of my job and will give me the ability, as a Case Manager, to handle conflict, tension, and emergency situations promptly and appropriately. In addition to my field experience, I also have research experience in the area of services provided to children and families. My curiosity drives innovation and I strive to find ways to improve processes and service to clients by conducting research, even on a small scale.

My combination of practical field and research experience makes me an excellent candidate for the position of Case Manager at Ohio Guidestone. It is my hope that I will be able to take my current skills to your agency and become a member of your team. I will follow up with you via email by the end of next week to discuss the possibility of scheduling an interview. Should you need to contact me I can be reached by cell (123-456-7891) or email (shansen1@jcu.edu). Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,



Salley Hansen

John Doe
1 University Way
University Heights, OH 44118

January 1, 2024

Patrick Scott, Recruiter
Human Resources
Awesome Inc.
123 Main St.
University Heights, OH 44118

Here is a sample Cover Letter that would be sent to an employer out of interest to work or intern at the organization, without there being a current job opening:

Dear Mr. Scott,

When I was introduced to your company through John Carroll's Career Fair, I was immediately drawn to the opportunity to join such an innovative organization. I am excited by the chance to gain marketing experience by employing my research and evaluation skills within Awesome Inc. As a junior majoring in Marketing and Communications at John Carroll University, I am passionate about identifying the needs of clients, developing new and improved ways of meeting those needs, and successfully executing those services while remaining competitive.

My previous internship at a local marketing and advertising firm has prepared me to present offers on new products and work with major clients. I pursued these clients through phone solicitation, email and direct mailings, which led to an increase in the company's client base by 5%. I also advertised products through managing social media networks including LinkedIn, Twitter, Instagram and Facebook, and created printed ads using brochures and flyers. With this experience, I have learned the best practices in enticing and gaining new clients, which will allow me to contribute to building the brand at Awesome Inc.

In addition to my practical work, my experience in a rigorous academic program make me a well-qualified applicant for this position. My coursework in Marketing Research, Innovation and Visual Communications in Digital Marketing, have prepared me to contribute in the following ways as an intern:

- Research current marketing trends to produce innovative strategies
- Coordinate promotional company events
- Build customer relationships through integrated multimedia

As I prepare for an exciting career in marketing, I am eager to gain a more detailed understanding of the field by collaborating with an experienced team. Thank you for taking the time to review my credentials. I welcome the opportunity for an interview and can be reached by cell (123-456-7891) or email johndoe19@jcu.edu.

Respectfully,



John Doe

Professional Adjectives

Accomplished	Focused	Positive
Achiever	Friendly	Powerful
Active	Fun	Practical
Adaptable	Generous	Prepared
Adept	Genuine	Proactive
Ambitious	Good listener	Productive
Analytical	Green	Professional
Articulate	Hard worker	Quality
Artistic	Helpful	Quick learner
Assertive	Honest	Realistic
Attentive	Imaginative	Reliable
Balanced	Independent	Resourceful
Broad-minded	Individual	Respectful
Candid	Industrious	Responsible
Changeable	Influential	Results-driven
Cheerful	Initiator	Results-oriented
Committed	Innovative	Rigorous
Communicative	Insightful	Self-disciplined
Compassionate	Interesting	Self-reliant
Competitive	Intuitive	Sense of humor
Confident	Inventive	Sensible
Conscientious	Knowledgeable	Sensitive
Consistent	Leader	Sincere
Constructive	Logical	Skilled
Cooperative	Loyal	Sociable
Courageous	Mature	Socially-conscious
Creative	Mediator	Solid
Critical	Meditative	Sophisticated
Curious	Methodical	Stable
Customer-oriented	Modest	Strong
Dependable	Motivated	Successful
Devoted	Objective	Tactful
Diplomatic	Open-minded	Talented
Direct	Optimistic	Team player
Down-to-earth	Organized	Tenacious
Dynamic	Original	Thoughtful
Easy going	Outgoing	Thriving
Eclectic	Particular	Traditional
Enterprising	Passionate	Trustworthy
Enthusiastic	Patient	Unconventional
Entrepreneurial	Perceptive	Understanding
Exciting	Persistent	Unique
Facilitator	Personable	Upbeat
Flexible	Persuasive	Vibrant