# Build Your Toolbox

## Your cover letter is your written substitute for a face-to-face meeting—your virtual introduction

## Cover Letter

### Yes . . . you have to write one—even if it's "optional".

Your well-written, personalized, and targeted cover letter will set you apart from, and above, all other candidates. It allows you to speak directly to your potential employer using a genuine, personal voice as if you were speaking with a friend over coffee. You can still be professional and grammatically correct using a friendly and enthusiastic tone. The more you target to each specific company, the better your chance of getting attention, interest, and landing an interview.

Experts say that only 3 percent of job applicants write personalized cover letters and that those applications go directly to the "yes" pile for further consideration.

Be one of that 3 percent! Your cover letter shows your enthusiasm for the company and job opportunity. Companies want to hire people who want to work for them . . . not just for anyone or in any job.

### Cover Letter Dos

- Write and submit a cover letter even if it is not required. It will help you stand out.
- Use business letter formatting even if you submit electronically or embed in an email.
- Harness the power of your cover letter to network. Unsolicited or cold-call cover letters show initiative and a desire to work specifically for that company. Remember, the vast majority of jobs are never posted. Jobs are often filled by candidates the company already has a relationship with. Introduce yourself—that person can be you!

### Cover Letter Don'ts

- Don't use the words "I'd love" or "I hope" or "I'm passionate about."
- Don't claim you have excellent skills without evidence to support. In fact, just provide the evidence—give enough, detailed and relevant information that helps them see that you're a good fit.
- Don't used exaggerated claims that you're perfect for the job. Don't sell . . . just tell.

# Use Your Same Résumé Contact Information Header for Consistency and Proper Business Letter Format No Matter How You're Sending

## Your Name

Home Street Address
City, State, ZIP Code

jstudent@mtu.edu
123-456-7890

Current Address
City, State, ZIP Code

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January 1, 2017

ABD Company
12345 Paradise Road
Awesome City, MI 12345

Dear Ms. Smith: or Dear Hiring Team:

**Paragraph 1—Answer questions you might be asked in that conversation over coffee . . .**
*Why are you writing and how did you learn about this opportunity?*

- Consider: I am writing to apply for the position of [exact position and any provided #]. I learned of this opportunity through [HuskyJOBS, company website, national job board, etc.]
- Also mention that you know others who work in the company and positive things they may have told you about the company, or that you know the company has a tradition of hiring Michigan Tech students.

*Why do you want to work for my company?*

- Research the company. Go beyond their website to find something unique and impressive—current or future projects and goals. Be specific—it shows you've done your research.

*Why are you interested in this job?*

- Read and understand the job description requirements, and tell why your education, experience, and skills is a match for their needs.
- "I believe my mechanical engineering studies, two internship experiences, and skills in FEA, test design, and new product design are a good match for your needs." (provide more details in your send paragraph).

*How do you feel about living in our city, town, area?*

- Do your research to find things you like and ways you might participate in your interests or hobbies in the area.

**Paragraph 2—Tell me about what you've done that's similar or related to what I need you to do.**

- Read and understand the job description to identify learn about the role's responsibilities. Choose 3 from the top of their list and provide detailed examples of similar or related work you've done. It's ok that the examples come from your résumé . . . just not in bullet form.

**Paragraph 3—How have you developed teamwork, communication, and leadership skills?**

- Tell about your industry, coursework and enterprise team experiences, as well as your co-curricular involvement and leadership on campus and in the community.

**Paragraph 4: Consider using these words . . .**

- My résumé is attached for your consideration, and I respectfully ask for the opportunity to interview with you at your earliest convenience. Thank you for your consideration. I will call to follow-up in 7-10 days and look forward to speaking with you then. I invite you to visit my LinkedIn profile for more information: provide the URL

Sincerely,

Your name