THE CATHERINE
CAREER GUIDE TO

Cover Letters

Getting Started

A cover letter is a vital component of your job application correspondence. Each time you send out a resume, include a focused, well-written cover letter.

For a cover letter to be effective, it should be unique to the position for which you are applying. Plan to write a new cover letter or adapt an existing one for each new position. This can be time-consuming, but it's important to present a convincing and customized image of yourself to an employer.

Why Send a Cover Letter?

A cover letter explains to a prospective employer who you are, why you're sending a resume, and why you'd be a great fit for a job opening and for an organization. It provides the opportunity to clarify how your skills and background will contribute to the organization's success. To do this well, you need to research the organization and the position itself. A good cover letter will address specific requirements of the position and attributes of the organization, and clarify how your background will make you a great fit.

Format Fundamentals

Your cover letter should be concisely written and no longer than one page. If sending a printed version, use the same font as your resume and print the cover letter on paper that matches your resume. The tone of the letter should be professional, but don't be afraid to show your enthusiasm for the job and organization. Vary your sentence structure; for example, don't start all of your sentences with "I." As with any formal correspondence, be sure your letter contains no typos or errors. Proofread and ask two others to do the same on your behalf.

Elements of a Cover Letter

■ ***Your Contact Information***

At the top of the page, list your address, city, state, and zip. You may include your email address and phone number if you choose. After your address, leave one blank line, and then type the date.

■ ***Employer's Contact Information***

Following the date, leave a blank line, then type the name, title,

organization name, and employer address.

■ ***Salutation***

Address your letter to a specific individual if possible. If a contact/ recruiter is not named in the job listing, try to locate this information on the employer website or call to ask for the name of the appropriate person. If you're unsuccessful, you may use a more generic salutation like Dear *Director of Human Resources, Recruiting Specialist, Search Committee, Manager of IT,* etc. Career Development can assist you if you're uncertain how to address the recipient(s) of your letter. Note that the salutation should be followed by a colon rather than a comma.

■ ***First Paragraph***

This is your chance to grab the reader's attention. Focus on the employer and use the word "you" or "your" within the first twelve words. If you've already spoken to the employer, being with "Thank you for taking time to speak with me yesterday about… *example* the management position." Explain why you're writing, what position you're applying for, and how you learned of the opening. Convey enthusiasm about the organization and position. If you're writing an inquiry letter in which there's not an immediate opening you're pursuing, identify the type of position or professional area that interests you.

■ ***Middle Paragraph(s)***

Use this section to make a case for why you're the best candidate for the opening. Make specific reference to qualities listed in the position description and explain how you've demonstrated/developed these qualities. Point out any specific achievements or accomplishments that are applicable to the position. Also speak to how your education and training have prepared you. Include statements that explain why you want to work for the organization to demonstrate further why you'd be a good match for the opening. If you're applying for a position with a nonprofit organization, explain how your background coincides with the organization's mission. Elaborate on experiences you mentioned in your resume; go into depth on a couple of the particularly relevant ones.

■ ***Closing Paragraph***

Reiterate your interest in the organization/position, and thank the reader for considering your application. If you indicate you'll follow up, make sure you do this with a phone call (if possible) the following week.

■ ***Signature***

Most business letters are closed with "Sincerely," followed by your printed name beneath. If sending a printed copy, leave room between "Sincerely" and your printed name to hand-sign the letter in black ink.

Before sending your cover letter—make sure it is carefully proofed for spelling, grammar and information

Your Address
City, State Zip
(Phone number or email optional)

Date of Mailing

Ms. Maria Sanders, O.T.
Manager, Occupational Therapy
South Memorial Hospital
3030 Builders Square
St. Paul, MN 55101

Dear Ms. Sanders:

It is with great interest that I am applying for your position of Occupational Therapy Assistant in the Acute Rehabilitation Unit. Julie McLain, a current Occupational Therapist with South Memorial Hospital and a graduate of St. Catherine University, encouraged me to apply.

As is stated on my resume, I am a recent graduate of St. Catherine's Occupational Therapy Assistant Program. During the course of my education I completed three separate fieldwork experiences, one of which was with XYZ rehabilitation unit. Under the direction of a licensed Occupational Therapist I gained competencies in effective communication with patients, implementation of care plans, and teamwork with interdisciplinary professionals. Similar to the mission of South Memorial Hospital, I am committed to the delivering remarkable health care experience to patients and families.

With respect to organizational skills, I have developed excellent time management practices over the last four years by balancing the demands of part-time work, academic commitments, field work, and volunteer service. My educational background in combination with my OT and work experiences have provided me with the practical skills I need to be a successful Occupational Therapy Assistant.

I would be delighted to have the opportunity to discuss my qualifications with you in an interview. I will contact you early next week to inquire about my application and ask if you need additional information to evaluate my candidacy. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
(Sign your name here)
Type your name

Your Address
City, State Zip
(Phone number or email optional)

Date of mailing

Ms. Sue Jones
Assistant Superintendent
Dade County Public Schools
1234 Main Road
Cleveland, OH 12345

Dear Ms. Jones:

It is with enthusiasm that I am inquiring about teaching positions in your school district for Fall 2016. I am a student at St. Catherine University, majoring in Elementary Education with anticipated licensure for K-6. I will graduate in May 2016 with additional experience in coaching and language fluency in Spanish.

Dade County Elementary Schools are of particular interest to me because of the implementation of innovative teaching strategies and commitment to diversity through curriculum design. As indicated in my resume, I am currently student teaching in an urban school in St. Paul, MN. In this role, I have been challenged professionally and personally to respond effectively to the diverse needs of a third grade, multicultural classroom. One of my most satisfying accomplishments has been working with a team of third and fourth grade teachers to design a social studies curriculum that integrates intercultural competencies. We have used a variety of teaching modalities to draw in students with different learning style, and have created lessons that allow students to address matters of difference within a respectful and supportive environment.

Classroom skills and knowledge that have made me a successful student teacher include being very organized, demonstrating excellent communication skills, possessing a genuine love of learning, and the ability to instill curiosity and drive in my students. My academic preparation has provided me with a strong background in child development and learning styles. In addition, I have been able to develop positive rapport with parents, school and community professionals, as well as with my students. My references are able to speak to these abilities in detail.

If additional information would be helpful to you in considering my candidacy for opportunities with the Dade County School District, please contact me. Thank you very much for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
(Sign your name here)
Type your name

Your Address
City, State Zip
(Phone number or email optional)

Date of mailing

Mr. Joe Smith
Assistant Manager of Brokerage Operations
Piper Jaffray & Co.
800 Nicollet Mall
Minneapolis, MN 12345

Dear Mr. Smith:

I appreciated the opportunity to meet you recently at the Minnesota Private College Job Fair. Our conversation made me even more excited about the prospect of obtaining an entry-level Brokerage Operations position at Piper Jaffray. I am a senior at St. Catherine University, majoring in Communications with a minor in Marketing, and will graduate in May 2016. I am eager to learn more about opportunities within Brokerage Operations.

My work and internship experiences in banking and financial services, coupled with my academic preparation, make me an excellent candidate for a Brokerage Operations position. Piper Jaffray promotes itself as “an enterprise passionate about client service.” I believe my strong communication and analytical skills would enable me to provide superior customer service and attend to clients with accuracy and thoroughness. I am accustomed to handling multiple responsibilities simultaneously and have frequently exercised this ability as a Resident Assistant at St. Catherine University and in my internship with ABC Services. In both roles I provide comprehensive customer service to diverse constituencies, and I have been complimented for my organizational abilities and significant contributions to team success.

I would welcome the chance to meet and discuss opportunities in your department upon my graduation. Since you generously gave me your business card at the Job Fair, I will call you next week to ask if you have questions about your background and interests. I look forward to speaking with you. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
(Sign your name here)
Type your name

ST. CATHERINE
UNIVERSITY

Office of Career Development
www.stkate.edu/career
651-690-8890

St. Paul Campus
Coeur de Catherine 460

Minneapolis Campus
Education Building 365

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