

# How to Write a Cover Letter

*Adapted from Hubspot, Brown University's Career Lab & The Nueva School's Internship Materials*

The purpose of the cover letter is to demonstrate to the employer that you are a good fit for their organization and the role for which you're applying. To really stand out, it's important to personalize your cover letter for each internship position. The first few sentences should show that you've done your research about the internship and the organization and should make an employer want to learn more about you. The body of the letter is your chance to pick out a few keywords from the position description and dive into examples showing how you've exhibited these skills. A cover letter is also the first writing sample that an employer sees from you. Make every word count and make sure the final version is polished and error-free.

## BEFORE YOU START

- **Research the position** – What are the key responsibilities? What skills, knowledge, and qualities are listed in the posting? Most of this can be found in the internship database. If you aren't sure what a position requires, ask our internship team for clarification.
- **Research the organization** – Make sure you understand what this organization does and how they describe themselves. You can usually find this information in the database or on their website.
- **Identify your most relevant skills** – Create “stories” from your experience that illustrate your competencies in the required areas.

## FORMATTING

- **Font** – Use a 12 point standard font (e.g., Times Roman, Garamond, Verdana, Helvetica, Arial).
- **Spacing** – Set document margins to 1” all around. Center your letter on the page and left justify all text.
- **Heading** – Use [a business letter format](#), *but do not include any personal contact information.*
- **Language** – Use formal terms and a professional tone.

## WRITING THE LETTER

- **Be specific** – Tailor each letter to the position and employer. This shows the employer that you are truly interested in the position and that you took the time to research the organization.
- **Be concise** – Keep it short, 1-page max (shorter is better). Be clear and authentic; avoid using flowery language or clichés.
- **Complement your resume/LinkedIn** – Rather than repeating information, tell specific stories and use examples. The angle should be what you can do for the employer, not what they can do for you.
- **Avoid negativity** – Don't apologize for not yet possessing a skill they would like to see.
- **Proofread, Proofread, Proofread** – Typos signal a lack of attention to detail.

# Cover Letter Template

The following cover letter template provides some initial structure, but don't expect this template to be one-size-fits-all. Ideally, you'll supplement this template with your own creativity and flair.

Your Name

Menlo Email ← *When applying to positions from the Menlo Internships Database, no personal contact information can be included in your resume or cover letter besides your Menlo email address. If other personal contact information is included, your application materials will not be accepted.*

Optional LinkedIn (hyperlinked)

Date

To Whom It May Concern (use the employer's name if available in the database),

Paragraph One

Body Paragraphs

Closing Paragraph

Sincerely,

Your Name

<b>FIRST PARAGRAPH</b>	<b>BODY PARAGRAPHS (no more than 2)</b>	<b>LAST PARAGRAPH</b>
Name the specific position for which you are applying.	Indicate why you are a good fit for the position. What skills & competencies do you possess that will benefit them?	Reiterate your interest in the organization and position.
State why you're interested in the position and the employer. Take time to personalize this in your own words. Build a connection to the particular position by referencing the specific research you have done about it and about the organization.	Scan the internship position description and requirements and pick out a few qualities you think apply to you. Mentioning the traits directly in your cover letter shows you've read the position description, and makes your cover letter more scannable.	Indicate that you are available to discuss your qualifications in an interview.
<i>Note: if an employer is offering multiple positions, make clear in the first line which one.</i>	Brainstorm a few compelling examples to show how you embody the most important characteristics. Don't just write, "I have excellent customer service skills." You need to prove it. Even if you don't have a lot of (or any) job experience, think about highlighting skills you've gained from extracurriculars, volunteer experience, or even passion projects (e.g. "my passion for dance led me to become a volunteer dance teacher, which helped me develop as a leader").	Conclude by thanking the hiring manager for taking the time to consider you, and end on a positive, confident note, such as, "I look forward to speaking with you soon."

