

# COVER LETTER GUIDE

*Adapted from Career & Internship Services Center at the Universities at Shady Grove*

## Purpose of a Cover Letter

**Convince the reader to look at your résumé.** It must be well-written, concise, informative, and targeted to that employer.

**Call attention to elements of your background,** e.g., education, leadership, experience, that are relevant to the position you are seeking. From the job description, identify one or two of your accomplishments that are related to the requirements of the position. Be specific and use examples so the employer can link its needs to your skills.

**Reflect your attitude, personality, motivation, enthusiasm, and communication skills.** Unlike your résumé, the cover letter allows you an opportunity to make the reader aware of the self-management skills you possess.

**Refer to any information specifically requested** in a job advertisement. Explain how you have the skills they require. Provide any information that might not be covered in your résumé, such as your availability date and/or letters of recommendations.

**Indicate follow-up.** Let the reader know when and how you will follow up on your inquiry.

## Components of the Cover Letter

1. **Contact Information:** Include a phone number and email address (use same header as résumé to show consistency). *Make sure your voice mail message and email address are professional (use your umaryland.edu account).*
2. **Employer's Contact Information:** Address your letter to a specific individual within the organization. If you are unable to locate a specific name, address your letter, "Dear Hiring Manager."
3. **Introduction Paragraph:** This is your opener. Tell when and where you learned of the position. Express why you are writing and what position you are applying for, with the job title. Tell specifically how you learned about the position or the organization, e.g., nursingjobs.umaryland.edu, a faculty member, an alumnus. If possible, include the name of a networking contact or someone who knows both you and the employer.
4. **Body Paragraph(s):** Explain the relevant skills you have and how they qualify you for the position based on the requirements stated in the position description (use their language and action verbs).

5. Closing Paragraph: Thank the reader for her/his time and state follow-up actions you plan to take. If the posting requests no phone calls, end your letter with a statement such as, "I look forward to hearing from you soon."

### **Questions to Consider When Writing a Cover Letter**

- Who is my audience?
- What is my purpose for writing?
- How can I best achieve my goals while focusing on the reader?
- What can I do to meet the company's/organization's needs?
- How can I stand out from my peers and capture the employer's interest?
- How can I engage the reader so they actually finish reading my letter?
- What practical experience can I use to demonstrate my skills and abilities?
- Does my letter advertise my résumé?
- Is my letter professional?
- Have I spent enough time creating, editing, and polishing my letter?
- Is my formatting okay? Use business letter format (margins:  $\frac{3}{4}$ -1  $\frac{1}{4}$ "; font: 10 -12 point; length: one page)
- Have I spent enough time proofreading my letter? Typos are unacceptable. *Sew watch out four mistakes. Spell check does not catch awl errors. It is important that ewe proofread your documents.*

# Sample Name

1234 Blank Drive

Baltimore, MD 21201

[Sample.name@umaryland.edu](mailto:Sample.name@umaryland.edu)

410-123-4567

Mr./Ms./Dr. FirstName LastName

Title

Name of Organization

Street or P.O. Box Address

City, State ZIP Code

Dear Mr./Ms./Dr. LastName,

Introduction: I am writing to express interest in the position of [enter exact position – if the posting uses a reference number, include it here], posted in/on [state the website or newspaper or person, etc.] on [Month, date]. I believe my skills are a good match for your requirements and would like to apply for the position.

Body: [Tell why you are interested in the employer or the profession/field/industry. Relate your background to the employer or position. Mention specific qualifications that make you a good fit for the employer's needs, specifically any qualifications that are in the job posting. Expand on transferable skills that are on your résumé. Include a sentence demonstrating you have conducted some research on the specific company/note their focus or mission.]

Closing: I am enclosing my résumé [and any other documents they request] for your review. I appreciate your consideration of my application for employment at [enter company name]. Thank you for your time and consideration. I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Sincerely,

Your signature

Your name typed with credentials