



## TIPS FOR A STANDOUT COVER LETTER

The purpose of a cover letter is to briefly introduce yourself, explain the position for which you are applying, and highlight your qualifications enough to peak the employer's interest to more closely read your resume. You always want to include a cover letter whenever you submit a resume, even if it is not specifically requested. If you email the resume, use your cover letter as the body of your email and attach your resume as a PDF document.

### CONTENT

- It's important that cover letters are written specifically for each employer. They need to know that you want to work for them, not that you just want a job.
- Research the employer and the organization before you start writing your cover letter. Websites and informational telephone calls are good ways to do this (See our handout on informational interviewing). Utilize this information in your letter to explain why you are interested in that particular company.
- Remember to write down names of anyone you spoke to regarding the position so that you can include them in your cover letter.
- When writing your cover letter, always open with why YOU would be an ideal candidate for the specific job.
- Describe particular experiences and skills, both informal and formal, which would make you a good fit for the position. Refer to CDO sheet of descriptive words. You can also use words from the job description to help guide your letter.
- Be specific about courses, skills, and how they apply to the position. You need to make the connection between your education and the position clear. Be sure to include details from the job description or your research to show your preparation.
- Focus on accomplishments including achievements, awards, and outstanding honors, particularly those that relate to the job to which you are applying.
- Close your letter with a paragraph which indicates your desire for an interview.
- Be sure to state that you will call to make sure your cover letter was received; learn about your status, and arrange an interview.

### FORMAT & STYLE

- Keep your cover letter to one page.
- Avoid lengthy paragraphs in your cover letter, two to three simple sentences per paragraph is best.
- Bulleted lists are one way to make specific qualifications prominent.
- Make sure your cover letter is quick and easy to read.
- Use personal pronouns ("I," "my," and "our") in your cover letter, but take care to have varying sentence structures. It's not the most interesting read if all sentences start with "I" or "my."
- Be aware that cover letters submitted electronically may have problems with formatting (indents, bold type, italics, etc.) so be sure to keep the formatting simple.
- Typos in a cover letter are easily missed, so be sure to proofread and have someone else look at it too. The staff at the CDO would be happy to review your cover letter. Come to Walk-In Hours or schedule an appointment.
- Put your cover letter in front of your resume and do not staple them.
- Print your cover letter on the same high quality bond paper as your resume.

### CDO RESOURCES & WEB SITES

- *No-Nonsense Cover Letters*
- *The Complete Idiot's Guide to The Perfect Cover Letter*
- *Job Choices* magazine series
- Creating a Winning Cover Letter- <http://www.wetfeet.com/advice-tools/resume-cover-letter/create-a-winning-cover-letter>

*For other tips & questions, contact the CDO at 410-337-6191 or visit the CDO website at [www.goucher.edu/cdo](http://www.goucher.edu/cdo)*

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Today's date

Ms. Mary Jones  
Managing Editor  
Baltimore Sun  
Xxxxxx Street  
Baltimore, MD 21204

Dear Ms. Jones:

My morning is not complete without a cup of coffee and the Baltimore Sun. I'm particularly drawn to the concise writing style of City Hall reporter Julie Scharper and Baltimore County schools reporter [Liz Bowie](#) and would enjoy working on the newsroom floor alongside them. In addition to my love for all things Baltimore, my strong writing and editing background make me an asset to my hometown paper. Please accept this letter as my application for the reporter position at the Baltimore Sun, which was recently advertised on [www.monster.com](http://www.monster.com).

My writing and editing experience has been developed and honed in a variety of settings. While working as a staff writer for the Goucher newspaper, I wrote feature articles on campus events and issues and assisted with editing for freelance writers. As a staff assistant for the Baltimore City Paper, I wrote articles on local events and assisted with editing and layout. Finally, as an editor for the campus yearbook, I coordinated the production of a 50-page yearbook. My positions gave me the opportunity to develop strong reporting skills, which include providing clear information to the reader, meeting deadlines, and checking facts.

Strong organizational, computer, and leadership are other skills I can bring to the Sun. As a resident assistant at Goucher, I provided supervision to a floor of 20 students, and as Sophomore Class President, I organized fund raising activities. I am proficient with MS Word, Excel, Access, and Publisher.

The combination of my skills and experiences, as well as my knowledge of the area, make me a definite asset to the Baltimore Sun. I look forward to speaking to you soon to discuss this position further and will be contacting you in two weeks to follow up on my application. Thank you in advance for considering my application.

Sincerely,

Goucher Q. Graduate

Enclosure

### **Header**

You could format as a traditional business letter, shown here. Another option is to use the same header as your resume, so that it's clear the documents go together.

### **Address & Salutation**

Address the letter to the person managing the hiring process or making the hiring decision. Contact the organization to inquire and verify spelling of hiring manager's name, title, company, and address, unless they state no phone calls please. As a last resort you can address to "Hiring Manager" or "Human Resource Representative."

### **Opening Paragraph**

Hook the reader with an interesting opening that clearly articulates why you want to work for that organization. Identify the specific position to which you are applying and how you learned of it. Mention any referral if applicable.

### **Body Paragraph(s)**

Briefly describe your strongest qualifications by using examples from your internships, employment, coursework, and co-curricular activities, as it relates to the position description. Highlight particularly relevant experience without repeating your resume. Interject your own style and personality into the letter by discussing your skills. Utilize wording used by the employer in the position description.

### **Closing Paragraph**

End your letter with your follow up action plan including when you will contact the employer. Express your appreciation.

### **Signature and Enclosure**

Sign the letter with a good pen. Add "enclosure" at the end of the letter. Remember to include resume or other necessary documents such as transcripts, writing samples, or references.