**Cover letters should be tailored for each position, just as you tailor your resume.**

**PURPOSE**

A cover letter is your introduction to an employer. In this letter, you should briefly describe your interest in the position and summarize your qualifications. A cover letter should not be copied word for word from your resume. A resume is a very succinct and detail-focused document – a cover letter is the opportunity to illustrate to the employer the two or three most relevant and pertinent skills and knowledge gained from past experiences that match those skills and knowledge desired from the job description and explains why you are the best candidate for the position.

**GUIDELINES**

- Always accompany a cover letter with a resume unless the company explicitly says not to include one
- It is advisable to send your cover letter to a specific person
  - Check job description, company website or call Human Resources for name
  - Find the specific person – use the correct prefix and spell their name right!
  - If a committee, then address the “Hiring Committee” and “Dear Hiring Committee”

**BASICS**

- Briefly describe your interest
- Summarize your qualifications
- Illustrate how you researched the company and how you know you would be the ideal candidate for the company and how the company would be ideal for you
  - If the company is working in a field you are passionate about – show your passion!
- Show your personality and your passions
- Use buzzwords – industry language and keywords from the job description
  - Read through the job description for stated skills desired by the employer
    - “Soft Skills” – ex: leadership skills, communication (verbal and written), teamwork, etc.
    - “Hard Skills” – ex: (specific to field), ex: AutoCAD, C++, MS Office

**FORMAT**

- Mirror the format from your resume – maintain consistency across documents
  - Margins should be no smaller than .5” and no larger than 1”
  - Font style should be a standard style, something that is easy to read
    - For example: Times New Roman, Calibri, Arial
  - Font size should be between 10 – 12 pt.
- Headings formatted correctly and professionally; you can copy and paste the header from your resume
- Organize paragraphs
  - Logical manner
  - Easy to read
- Language and Grammar
  - Professional and polite
    - Be concise as possible
    - Stay away from slang, clichés, jargon and flowery language
  - Avoid too many “I” statements
    - Examples to avoid: “I feel like I will be a great asset.” Instead use your experiences to SHOW the company HOW you will be a great asset
    - Use action verbs, not passive – for example: instead of “I believe I would be a good fit” say “I am a good fit for this position based on my education, experiences, and technical skills”
- Be sure to proofread your cover letter yourself or find someone you trust to proofread for you!
  - Take advantage of the Writing Center on campus located at the Academic Success Center
SAMPLE COVER LETTER

Thomas G. Clemson
922 Tiger Drive
Clemson, SC 29634

August 28, 2014

Mr. Tom Smith
Director of Human Resources
First National Bank of Clemson
2001 Tiger Boulevard
Clemson, SC 29633

Dear Mr. Smith:

[First Paragraph, 2-3 Sentences] Tell Mr. Smith why you are writing. If you are applying for a position, A) tell him what position you are applying for; a company probably has multiple positions open – be clear about the one you are interested in, B) tell him how you learned about the position; through a personal contact, an advertisement, the company’s website, the Career Center, ClemsonJobLink, etc. – companies like to know where their money is best being spent.

[Second Paragraph] This paragraph is for the nitty and gritty of the cover letter. Describe your interest in the company and knowledge of the company or organization, and show how you are qualified for the position. Elaborate on information in your resume, but do not repeat it – this is your chance to expand on your resume. Be concise and give specific examples of your skills. This is the paragraph in which you “sell yourself” – read through the job description and see what the employer is looking for in an applicant. For example: the job description states “the candidate should have good human relations and communications skills,” so be sure to talk about an experience in which you had to embody those skills.

[Third Paragraph] Use this paragraph to talk about why you are interested in this job and organization. Infuse organization-specific information (2-3 sentences) from researching the company. Things to consider: mission, vision, goals, strategic plan, organizational structure, current events, trends, best practices, etc. Use this paragraph to show why you are a good a fit for the company, not just the open position – make a connection between you and the company.

[Final Paragraph] This is the last thoughts section for the employer. Reiterate your interest and thank the employer for taking the time to read your cover letter/resume. Make sure that you include your contact information here as well – phone number and email address. Conclude with a sentence about how you would like the opportunity to meet and discuss your interest/qualifications in person.

Sincerely,

Thomas G. Clemson

Enclosure

Your Information: use your current contact information (like in the example format) or copy/paste header from resume (document cohesion)

Date: use the date that you submit the documents

Employer’s information: it is extremely important to have the name of the person to whom you are sending your resume and cover letter. Oftentimes, the contact person will be listed on the job description. If not, check the company website or call the human resources department.

Enclosure: add “Enclosure” to notify employer that this document is part of a packet including your resume
Entry-Level Electrical Engineer

Company: Carollo Engineers
Location: Littleton, CO

Carollo Engineers, a nationally recognized engineering firm specializing in water and wastewater engineering, is seeking an Electrical Engineer ~ Entry Level to join our team in our Littleton, CO office.

Responsibilities:
- performing basic engineering tasks and calculations for water and wastewater treatment facilities under the direction of a Lead Electrical Engineer; lighting and receptacle designs, including panel schedule load and phase balancing; conduit layout and fill calculations; wire sizing; submittal review; performs specification research; reviews work for discrepancies or inconsistencies;
- develops and improves technical knowledge and skills; maintains professionalism in relationships with other office and team members; plans what needs to be communicated and how to present the information effectively; seeks out company and client technical standards and implements them on projects;
- constructively builds and maintains relationships with others on the project design team; travel required when requested; makes site visits to observe projects during construction.

Required knowledge, skills, and abilities:
- basic and advanced course work in AC machinery, electrical measurements, basic understanding of the National Electrical Code; ability to read and understand One-Line Diagrams and Control Schematics; working knowledge of symmetrical components, fault current calculations, and machine theory; ability to work with supervisor to effectively complete routine tasks; capable of breaking a task into one or more component parts and sequencing those parts effectively; general awareness of need for practicality and constructability of design solutions; general awareness of the scope, schedule and budget assigned for engineering tasks; ability to work with more experienced electrical engineers to apply standard textbook electrical design and analysis approach; follows selected design approach through completion of analysis and detailing; logically organizes work; ability to listen to others and ask clarifying questions; willingness to accept suggestions and corrections on organization and planning issues; seeks help to understand and productively work through conflict to keep tasks moving ahead; strong verbal and written communications skills that are well organized and persuasive; proficient in MS Word and Excel.

Required education and experience:
- Bachelor’s degree in Electrical Engineering and zero to three years’ experience; course work in power engineering; EIT or FE license - or the ability to obtain within one year after employment.

Preferred education and experience:
- Master’s degree in electrical engineering with a Power specialty; public speaking experience.
From the job description, you know that Mayo Clinic is looking for “good human relations and communication skills”, “customer-focused”, and “decision making and problem-solving ability”. This second paragraph is your opportunity to talk about yourself and what makes you a good candidate, but to also illustrate these skills that you possess and examples of experiences in which you displayed them. For instance, if you had experience with the New Student and Family Programs and displayed customer service skills and/or good human relations and communications skills discuss those experiences. The resume can only show so much. The cover letter is your opportunity to showcase your skills and experience and take advantage of it.

Conclusion: Wrap up your cover letter by reiterating your interest in the position and company and close with your contact information and the offer for Ms. Haley to reach out to you about the position.

Sincerely,

Anna Marie Calhoun
Enclosure
These lists of phrases will help you write an effective cover letter.

- Please accept this letter and resume as my application...
- Please accept this letter as my application for the position.
- Please accept this letter as my enthusiastic application for the position.
- I learned of this opportunity from...
- I am very interested in pursuing this exceptional opportunity.
- My keen interest in this position stems from...
- My professional experience is solid and well-rounded.
- My primary focus involved...
- This position represents a tremendous opportunity to continue my clear and committed career path...
- I believe the combination of my education and experiences have prepared me...
- As you can see from my resume...
- As indicated by my resume...
- As a result of these experiences, not only am I qualified for this position, I will thoroughly enjoy it!
- Beyond my enthusiasm for this opening, I offer all the essential elements it requires.
- I firmly believe my experience, education and background would enable me to make a significant contribution.
- It is a challenging position for which I believe I am well qualified.
- ... help to ensure optimum effectiveness.
- My interest and knowledge in this area was further enhanced by...
- My particular area of effectiveness is...
- Although I have found my current position to be professionally rewarding...
- My professional experiences are supplemented by...
- My goal is...
- ... provides the opportunity to accomplish this goal.
- Let me thank you in advance for your consideration.
- Thank you for considering me for this very important position.
- Thank you for your time and consideration of my resume and qualifications.
- I look forward with enthusiasm to an opportunity for an interview.
- Sincerely
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Updated: 2/2015