

COVER LETTER GUIDELINES



RICE UNIVERSITY

Center for Career Development

COVER LETTER 101

What's the purpose of a cover letter?

- Demonstrate to the employer that you are a great fit for the position and the organization.
- Highlight your motivation, enthusiasm, and qualifications for the job, beyond what is communicated in your resume.
- Showcase your personality and ability to convey ideas.

How do I get started?

Before writing your cover letter, you should do your research on the industry, field, company/organization, and the job itself to fully understand what the employer is seeking. Ask yourself the following questions:

- To whom should you address the letter? When possible, your cover letter should be addressed to the hiring manager or recruiter in charge.
- Why do you want the job?
- What qualifications does the employer want? Identify at least three traits or qualifications the employer is seeking.
- How does your experience relate to the job? Try to list three achievements or qualities that are related to the job duties/responsibilities.
- Why do you want to work for this organization? Search for something specific about its services, product, mission, and vision rather than saying it is an “excellent” company.

IS YOUR COVER LETTER...	Yes	No
Consistent with your resume, e.g., header, font?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
No more than one page?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Free of spelling and grammar errors?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Tailored to the specific position you are applying for?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

DOES YOUR COVER LETTER...	Yes	No
Address a specific person or the hiring manager?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
State why you are interested in the position and/or organization?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Match your qualifications to the position and/or organization?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Give specific examples to illustrate your past accomplishments?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Use varied sentence structures instead of starting each sentence with “I”?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Indicate your desire and availability for an interview?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



Sample Cover Letter

NOTE: Cover letter guidelines can vary by industry. If you need assistance, schedule an appointment with the CCD for more information about how to customize your cover letter - <https://ccd.rice.edu/students/career-counseling>

HEADER FROM YOUR RESUME HERE

Date

Contact person name and title
Company name
Address

RE: Reference the position to which you are applying

Dear Name of Person/Position Title/Hiring Manager: (*DO NOT* write “To whom it may concern”)

INTRODUCTORY PARAGRAPH

Clearly state the purpose of your letter, name the position or type of work you are seeking, and, where applicable, how you learned about the opportunity. Mention the key skills or expertise that qualify you for the job. This paragraph should be no longer than 3-4 sentences.

BODY PARAGRAPH(S)

Elaborate on your qualifications for the specific position, e.g., relevant working experience, courses, and volunteer experiences. Relate each body paragraph back to the job description. Doing thorough research on the position and the company will help you compose a more persuasive letter. You may choose to highlight a couple of examples from your resume to support your statements; however, do not reiterate your entire resume. Explain **why** you are interested in the position and the organization. Discuss why you want to work for this employer and what would be unique about this organization and/or role for you.

BE SURE to include any specifics that are required/preferred by the organization (e.g. you speak Spanish, have experience with specific software packages, have an achievement). Each skill/experience you want to highlight can also be formatted as a bulleted paragraph (*no more than three bulleted paragraphs*) if desired.

CONCLUDING PARAGRAPH

Reiterate your interest in the position, and your enthusiasm for using your skills to contribute to the work of the organization. Provide your email and phone number so that the employer can reach out for any questions or arrange an interview. Conclude the letter by expressing appreciation for being considered.

SIGNATURE

Sincerely/Regards/Thank you,

Skip four spaces and sign here (*only if sending in hard copy or PDF*)

Your Full Name (First and Last Name)



About the RICE CENTER FOR CAREER DEVELOPMENT

VISION:

To empower all Rice students to find and make their place in the world.

MISSION:

We believe all Rice students are capable of achieving their professional goals.

Our mission is to support this by:

- **EDUCATING** them on knowledge of self, career options, and resources
- **CONNECTING** them with opportunities through the global Rice network
- **EMPOWERING** them with the confidence, skills, and tools to achieve lifelong career fulfillment

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