



CAREER SERVICES / COVER LETTERS

OVERVIEW

The first and most important rule is that *each* cover letter you write needs to be tailored to the organization and the position. Each position is unique and how you might “fit” the position needs to be articulated clearly.

GENERAL TIPS TO KEEP IN MIND

- ✓ The letter may not be the first thing an organization reads. The resume will be most important to them. However, do not slack on the letter! If you are qualified the hiring manager and others WILL read this document.
- ✓ Should be written as a business letter, and should be kept short and focused - *one page only (3-4 paragraphs)*
- ✓ The cover letter serves as a writing sample, so be SURE to have it proof-read by others. Don't just use spell-check!
- ✓ Keep in mind, you are selling yourself –this letter links your resume to the job at hand –how are you qualified for it specifically? This letter should help them understand that.
- ✓ Single space within each paragraph, double space between paragraphs

COVER LETTER BREAKDOWN

Beginning: Introductory Paragraph

This is **the attention grabber** that should arouse the reader's interest. If you are applying for a specific job, mention the position title and position number (if applicable). Give the person's name, if someone referred you to the company. This paragraph may include your knowledge of the organization, why you want to work for them and some brief background experience/education that relates to the position. Most introductory paragraphs are short, so be brief and clear.

Middle: Selling and Fit (1 or 2 paragraphs)

This is the sales pitch. It is the longest section and may be split into two paragraphs. You attempt to persuade the employer that you are worth an interview. Present specific abilities, education, and/or experience that make you an attractive candidate for the position. Highlight a few accomplishments relevant to this position. Reveal a personal goal that could be realized with this firm. Why are you a great fit? Why should they hire you? How can you help solve their challenges?

End: Closing Paragraph

Finish strong, stating why this opportunity is important to you. This is the request for action. Ask for an interview or a meeting to discuss how your skills might assist the employer. Offer to provide more information (e.g. samples of your work, references, more details of your past experience or education, etc.). Provide your telephone number and the best times to be contacted.

ADDITIONAL IMPACT TIPS

- Give your BEST examples – choose wisely; do not include ALL of your work examples, only the most relevant ones for THIS job.
- Research the organization and use that insight to make a deeper connection in the cover letter to their mission, brand, accomplishments, etc.
- In referencing a personal referral, state that the referral suggested you write or email the contact.
- Utilize impressive quotes from letters of reference in your cover letter, e.g. “I am highly organized; my internship supervisor stated in her letter of reference”, ‘Alex is the most organized intern I have ever had.’
- Talk about and quantify your accomplishments that relate to the position.
- If you can address the letter to a person, try to do so. This might require some investigation.
- Proof-read and have others proof-read your letter for errors, Career Services at CMC, your faculty members and staff will help review your cover letter.
- Do not overuse “I” to begin sentences, vary the sentence structure.
- Always sign your cover letter except for email versions.
- For hard copies of this document, match the paper and heading of your cover letter to that of your resume for a nice professional touch.
- If you lack a skill or some required experience discuss how you can pick up the skill quickly, or how other experience will substitute.

MISTAKES TO AVOID

- Do not “swap and drop”! If you can just swap out one company name for another, your letter is not tailored enough.
- Never misrepresent your background, skills and experiences.
- Never sound desperate or negative.
- Never confess shortcomings, give a positive slant to your background and experience.
- Don’t repeat your resume, but summarize and enhance, add your best personality traits and word pictures that aren’t on the resume.
- Always send an email version of your cover letter and resume to yourself first to make sure it opens up perfectly. It is also recommended to save your materials as a PDF prior to e-mailing your application, as PDF files will not change when opened in any format.
- Always read and follow any employer instructions for submitting a cover letter and resume.

SAMPLE COVER LETTER OUTLINE

Your address
City, State, Zip
Email, Phone

Date

Mr. /Ms. Name
Title

Company

Address

City, State, Zip

Dear Mr. /Ms. Last Name:

Introductory Paragraph

Middle Paragraph(s)

Final Paragraph

Sincerely,

Your Signature Here

Your Printed Name

Cover Letter Sample

No advertised position; a letter of inquiry or prospecting letter

Tom Levin

5050 Eagle Ranch St. Leadville, CO 80461 (316) 453-4455 levin@coloradomtn.edu

December 1, 20xx

Ms. Maria Rio
Senior Vice President
GDD & Associates
1200 Teller Rd.
Leadville, CO 80461

Dear Ms. Rio:

I was fortunate enough to see your recent quote in the Herald Democrat where you described GDD & Associates' new Management Development Program as one that "hires liberal arts majors who have outstanding academic achievement tied with strong leadership and people skills." I fit that description and will be graduating this spring from Colorado Mountain College. I am researching innovative companies like GDD & Associates where my skills and abilities can make a significant contribution.

Some of my qualifications include:

- Considerable *management and leadership experience*, most notably as President of the student body, which included leading seven other executive committee members and representing the students to the administration.
- *Student leader*, served as a Senator for two years within the Student Government Association's student senate.
- *Strong organizational and academic skills*, having maintained a 3.53 GPA while working 25 hours a week to finance 60% of my education.
- *Going beyond*, as communicated from my internship supervisor in one of my letters of reference, "Tom has done far more in his internship than was required."
- *Excellent communication and analytical skills* developed through my English major, Psychology minor, two years customer service experience, and training six co-workers.

I would enjoy meeting with you to discuss how I might be an excellent candidate for your program. My immediate goal of entering a management training program with an energetic and growing company matches your goal of hiring students with "high-quality academic and leadership experience." I will call early next week to follow up on the possibility of our meeting to discuss future opportunities with GDD & Associates. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Tom Levin

Advertised position

Bethany Roberts

100 Oxford Ln.

Steamboat Springs, CO 80487

(970) 555-5555

roberts@coloradomtn.edu

September 6, 20xx

Mr. Josh Valmer III.
Employment Manager
Loveland Ski Operations
PO Box 899
Georgetown, CO 80444
Loveland, CO 80443

Dear Mr. Valmer:

As an admirer of Joshua Valmer Sr., I watched several years ago when Rocky Mountain Ski and Sports opened a store in my hometown. I was intrigued by the wonders of mass distribution, discount prices, and retail innovation. I read in last week's edition of Sports Retail that one of your subsidiaries, Loveland Retail, is looking to grow beyond the 200 retail stores it currently operates in the Northeast. My human resource approach can help your company make sound strategic personnel decisions as you expand into the Midwest region. Your advertised position as Human Resources Manager fits perfectly with my background and experience.

For the past six years, I held increasingly responsible positions in the human resources profession. I began my career as an Assistant Store Manager at Sports World, a large sporting goods store, and was promoted to Manager after 18 months. Three years ago, I accepted a position as Director of HR for Cysco, another rapidly growing distributor of food products supplying large restaurant chains. At both Sports World and Cysco, I served as an HR Generalist and am very familiar with all aspects of personnel functions including: recruiting, staff planning, professional development training, working with unions, employee relations and enhancement programs as well as salary and benefits programs.

I am very enthusiastic about having an opportunity to discuss your management team's plans for the future, and the Human Resources department's role in making these goals a reality. I will call you the week of September 16th to confirm the receipt of my résumé and schedule a mutually convenient time for us to get together. Thank you for your consideration and time.

Sincerely Yours,

Bethany E. Roberts

Cover Letter Sample – Entry level

Advertised position

Dear Mr./Ms. LastName,

I am writing to apply for the position of Media Relations Assistant Manager, which I saw advertised on MediaJobs.com. ABCD is a fast-moving global institution and an outstanding communications pioneer, now poised to guide the direction of print journalism. I believe that my extensive experience in media makes me an ideal candidate for this position at your company.

As a recent graduate of the State University, I have a significant background in media. As a media major, I held multiple internships, including Media Relations Coordinator Intern at XYZ Company. I also served as president of the Media and Marketing Club at school. We successfully developed and pitched an advertisement campaign for a local nonprofit, which helped increase donations to the nonprofit by 22 percent.

You state in your job listing that you are looking for someone with strong writing skills and an attention to detail. Throughout all four years of college, I worked part-time as a copy editor for an online journal. This job required great attention to detail in writing and editing. I would love to bring my editing skills to a position with your company.

These strengths, combined with deep and varied academic, internship, and employment experience, prepare me to make a strong and immediate impact at ABCD.

I am excited about the opportunity to join the ABCD team as it moves to the center of the print media conversation. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Your Signature (*hard copy letter*)

Your Typed Name

COVER LETTER CHECK LIST

FORMAT & APPEARANCE

- _____ Do phrases begin with action verbs?
- _____ Is writing style consistent throughout the resume and cover letter?
- _____ Is choice of vocabulary appropriate to your job target (i.e., avoid using the jargon of your current field if you are making a career transition)?
- _____ Are grammar, punctuation, and spelling correct?
- _____ Are sentences of a readable length?
- _____ Have extraneous phrases, such as “responsible for” been eliminated?
- _____ Did I include my name, address, zip code, email and telephone number?
- _____ Is my cover letter an appropriate length? (1 page or less preferred)
- _____ Did I check and correct any spelling, grammar and punctuation errors?
- _____ Does the paper quality, font, and formatting match my resume paper?
- _____ Is the letter vertically centered on the page? Did I use a business letter format (full block, modified block or indented format)?

CONTENT

- _____ Did I address my letter to an individual in a hiring position? If I could not find an individual, did I address it “Dear Employer” or “Dear Hiring Manager”?
- _____ Does the first line state why I am writing and the position for which I am applying?
- _____ Was I concise and specific when discussing career goals and qualifications?
- _____ Do I describe what I can contribute to the organization not what I can get out of it?
- _____ Did I include information that will intrigue the employer to read my resume or did I just restate what is on my resume?
- _____ Did I tell the reader why they should hire me?
- _____ Did I end my letter stating the action I will take next? For example, did I state that I would be calling to request an appointment to discuss the position?
- _____ Did I limit the use of sentences starting with “I”? Instead did I use “This experience” or “In this internship, I demonstrated”?
- _____ Did I demonstrate enthusiasm and energy for the position?
- _____ Did I refer to personal qualities that are crucial to success in the field