

# Cover Letter Guide

## What is it?

A cover letter is a well-crafted, professional letter that accompanies a résumé. It is considered a formal communication which serves as an introduction of you and your qualifications to a prospective employer. Résumés are often read before letters, so the goal is to provide the employer with the incentive to invite you for an interview.

## Why do I need one?

Cover letters are written when you are aware that an opening exists and you wish to address your specific attributes which qualify you. It is an extension of your résumé that offers the chance to go more in depth about certain experiences that will differentiate you from other applicants. Another type of cover letter is a letter of inquiry, in which you are unaware of any specific vacancies, but want to establish your interest in opportunities which may become available with a particular employer.

## Should I have more than one?

Yes! Just like résumés, cover letters should be personalized to the specific position and organization you are applying to. Cover letters give you an opportunity to express why you're the best candidate for that position. You will want to reflect different qualities and achievements depending on the application.

## What are some Career Development resources?

- Cover letter templates
- Cover letter beginner's worksheet

*All can be found in office and on [www.geneseo.edu/career\\_development](http://www.geneseo.edu/career_development)*

## What are some tips?

### *Accompanied with résumé*

A cover letter should always be sent with a résumé. Since the résumé is typically read first, do not repeat all your information onto your cover letter. This wastes space that should be designated to *explaining* your qualifications, instead of stating them.

### *Length*

Cover letters are not autobiographies. The goal is to keep your letter short enough to sustain the interest of the reader while best expressing your qualifications. With this being said, it should be kept to one page.

### Appearance

Appearance is very important when making a first impression. Do not use harsh colors, stick to black. Format the letter in paragraph form. Break it up into 2-3 paragraphs to make it easier to read. Have someone proofread your letter for errors, awkward phrases, etc. Your letter must be accurate, attractive and error-free.

### Language

Unlike a résumé, use personal pronouns in a cover letter since you are explaining your qualifications. Also, personalize the letter whenever possible. For example, mention the name of the organization in the body of your letter rather than referring to "your organization". When discussing your relevant experiences, it can help to think about not only what you've done, but how well you've done it.

### Paper/Printing

If printing, use high quality bond paper in the same color as your résumé. If sending electronically, also convert the Word document to a PDF.

### Addressed to

Your letter must be directed to a specific person and reflect that person's correct title. It is appropriate to call the organization's human resources office to ask for the correct name and title. If necessary, refer to a person's title, ex. 'Dear Human Resource Director', do not use 'Dear Sir/Madam'.

#### Contact

116 Erwin Hall  
Phone: (585) 245-5721  
Email: [careers@geneseo.edu](mailto:careers@geneseo.edu)

#### Office Hours

M-F: 8am-4:30pm

#### Walk-in Hours

Located on website  
[geneseo.edu/career\\_development](http://geneseo.edu/career_development)

**Remember, your cover letter, résumé and reference page are typically your first introduction to an employer and their presentation makes a statement about you. Are you neat, organized, do you use your words well and with impact, are your sentences coherent and enlightening? Take the time and care to make a strong impression!**

## Cover Letter Worksheet

Your Name  
Your Address

Date

Addressee (Name of recipient)  
Title  
Company Name  
Company Address  
City, State, Zip

### Greeting

Dear \_\_\_\_\_, (try to get a name)

### Opening Paragraph:

Enthusiastic expression of why you are writing, how you found out about the opening (if you are responding to an ad), and a very brief statement about why you are qualified.

### Middle Paragraph:

#### 1. Why Them?

- a. Macro level: (why that field, i.e., health care, education, etc.)
- b. Micro level: (why them in particular; why that company, school district, etc.)

#### 2. Why you?

I would make an immediate contribution to (name of company) through my \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_. List skills or experiences that are directly relevant to the internship/grad school/job you're applying for.

### Final Paragraph:

Reinforce your strong interest in the position and why you would bring value added to the employer, share your cell #, and thank them for their consideration of your application.

Sincerely,

*Full Name*

Full Name

## Cover Letter Sample – Liberal Arts



Name  
214 Main Street  
Geneseo, NY 14454

October 29, 2017

Ms. Janine Dougherty  
Director  
Human Resources Department  
Museum of Modern Art  
11 West 53rd Street  
New York, NY 10019-5497

Dear Ms. Dougherty,

I am interested in being considered for the Assistant to the Chief Curator's position opening with your museum. I learned about this opportunity through reading the job posting on the Current Available Positions page on your website. With my goal of pursuing a career in archival and curatorial work, I believe that working at the Museum of Modern Art would provide an excellent opportunity to apply my skills and passion for the arts. I am also confident I would be a valuable asset to your team.

I will be graduating from SUNY Geneseo in May 2018 with a Bachelor's degree in Art History and a minor in Museum Studies. I have a wealth of experience in the arts as well as a solid coursework foundation. As a student assistant at SUNY Geneseo's Visual Resource Center, I am trained in the specific cataloguing method of our collection and the photographing technique for slide creation. With care and accuracy, I file, bind, label and scan slides to our exacting standards. In addition, as a summer intern at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, DC, I organized and labeled photographs for their various collections.

Fascinated by ideas and world perspectives, I utilized the unique opportunities available to me outside of my traditional coursework by studying abroad in Rome, Italy during the summer of 2016. Through this enlightening experience, I developed Italian language skills and my knowledge of the great works of art from the Renaissance period. Through my formal education, involvement in setting up student art shows, and personal art experience I have strengthened my natural eye for color, composition and design. With my plans focused around curatorial work, having the chance to work at a world-renowned museum such as yours would enable me to apply my well-honed skills and knowledge.

I am very interested in having the opportunity to talk with you further about my background and qualifications. Please feel free to contact me at: 585-245-1274 or via email at [ejones@geneseo.edu](mailto:ejones@geneseo.edu) at your convenience. Thank you very much for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Eileen A. Jones