

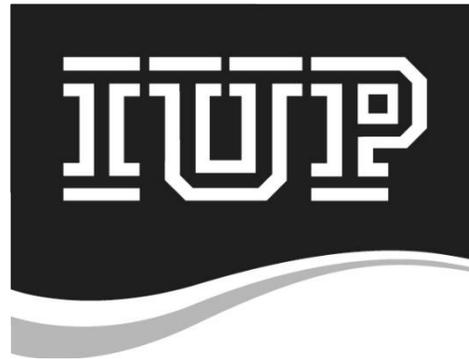
*A guide to crafting a compelling cover letter.*

# Cover Letters

**302 Pratt Hall  
(724) 357-2235  
[www.iup.edu/career](http://www.iup.edu/career)  
[career-development@iup.edu](mailto:career-development@iup.edu)**

**Monday, Thursday, Friday  
8:00 a.m.—4:30 p.m.**

**Tuesday, Wednesday  
8:00 a.m.—7:00 p.m.**



**Career and Professional Development Center**

## COVER LETTERS

The cover letter allows you to expand and elaborate on information contained in your résumé. An effective cover letter is designed for the position to which you are applying. You should always include a cover letter when applying by mail or when hand-delivering your resume to an employer. Use the checklist below to help you develop your cover letter.

| ITEM   | WHY?  |  |
|--|---|--|
|  | <b>FORMAT</b>   |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> My cover letter uses an appropriate format for business letters   |    | Using a standard business letter format gives your cover letter a professional appearance  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> My cover letter is no more than one page (3-6 paragraphs) in length   |    | It is important to be thorough, but as brief as possible, in your cover letter   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I have ensured my name is spelled the same way as on my resume header. Ex. Mike vs. Michael   |   | This keeps your personal brand consistent  |
|  | <b>CONTENT</b>  |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> The first paragraph states the title of the position and how I learned about it, along with a brief description of my academic background and explanation of why I am a good fit for the position |    | This introductory paragraph should get the reader's attention so they want to learn more about you   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> The body paragraph refers the reader to my resume and contains examples from my experience that relate to the qualifications listed for the position  |    | This paragraph serves as a marketing tool to "sell" your qualifications and interest   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> The final paragraph thanks the reader for considering my application, indicates my interest in an interview, and reiterates the phone number and/or e-mail address where I can be contacted       |    | This shows your appreciation for the opportunity and allows you to express your eagerness for moving on to the next step in the hiring process |
|  | <b>MECHANICS</b>  |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> My cover letter is free of typos, grammatical errors, and misspellings  |  | This document is not only your first impression, but may also be treated as a writing sample   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I have varied my sentence structure so that every sentence does not begin with "I"  |  | Varying sentence structure makes your letter more interesting to read  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I have signed my cover letter in blue or black ink  |  | This is often overlooked, but is an important detail   |
|  | <b>ADDITIONAL TIPS</b>  |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I researched the employer and included relevant research in the letter  |  | Researching allows you to tailor your cover letter to the employer and position  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I have used the language the employer uses in the job posting to describe my own skills and experience  |  | This creates the impression of a close match between your qualifications and the requirements for the position                                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I have NOT mentioned deficiencies in my education or experience in my cover letter  |  | This denies the reader an opportunity to eliminate you from consideration  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I have enclosed all other materials requested with my cover letter  |  | These may include your resume, reference list, transcript, etc.  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I have kept a copy of each cover letter for future reference  |  | This serves as a record of your contacts for each position   |

## SAMPLE COVER LETTER FORMAT

Your street address  
City, State Zip Code

Date (in written out form)

Mr./Ms./Dr. Name  
Title  
Name of Organization  
Street Address  
City, State Zip Code

Dear Mr. Name:

Introduce yourself by describing your current status and major or background. State where you learned of the organization or opportunity. If you were referred by a particular person, mention them by name. Write a compelling lead-in statement expressing your confidence in being a highly qualified candidate.

Your body paragraphs are essentially your opportunity to provide a sales pitch as to why you are the best fit for this position. Highlight the portions of your resume that relate to the organization or position, without restating your resume word for word. Expand upon one or two points that are most applicable. If possible, use the language that is used in the advertisement or job description to describe your own experience. Mention any personal qualities or characteristics that make you an outstanding candidate for the job. Also make sure you support the skills, experiences, and personal qualities you highlight with examples. You may include a statement referring the reader to the enclosed résumé.

The final paragraph details what you want to happen next (an interview!). Let them know that you look forward to the opportunity to meet them in person. If appropriate, state that you will follow up by phone with the employer during a certain time period. Mention a telephone number and email where you can be reached in the meantime. Thank the reader for taking the time to consider your application.

Closing,

*(Your handwritten signature)*

Type your full name

## SAMPLE COVER LETTER

### Alexandra D. Smith

275 Student Lane • Indiana, PA 15701 • 724-555-8888 (cell) • [Alexandra\\_Smith@gmail.com](mailto:Alexandra_Smith@gmail.com)

[www.linkedin.com/in/Alexandra.D.Smith](http://www.linkedin.com/in/Alexandra.D.Smith)

September 15, 2013

Mr. Daniel Perry  
Executive Producer, 'Blues Clues'  
NICK JR.  
1633 Broadway, 4th Floor  
New York, NY 10019

Dear Mr. Perry:

As an ardent fan of the 'Blue's Clues' television show, I was pleased to learn of your Executive Production Assistant position through CareerBuilder. I write to express my interest in the position and to submit my resume for your consideration. I will be graduating in December from Indiana University of Pennsylvania with a Bachelor of Science degree in Communication Media.

I offer you experience in production as well as knowledge of early childhood development theory. Through my position as a Production Intern at Children's Television Workshop last summer, I was able to develop a working knowledge of studio techniques and procedures. In addition, my experience working as a temporary receptionist at Fox News enabled me to obtain the administrative experience necessary to work in a busy production environment. Furthermore, I feel that I offer you the "professional demeanor, good judgment, and poise under pressure" that you request in the position description. As a Community Assistant, I learned how to handle delicate situations in a professional, confidential and competent manner. This was exhibited as I encountered situations around mental health, domestic violence, and alcohol violations.

Although I am significantly older than your target audience, I have always loved children's television programming. In fact, I recently downloaded your "recipe" for a recyclable guitar from the Blue's Clues homepage, and utilized a modified version of the recipe as a lesson plan for a course in Elementary Education. As my long-term career goal is to create children's television programs, this position would be a wonderful opportunity for me to gain experience in a supportive setting.

I would welcome the opportunity to learn more about this position and to meet with you in person. Please feel free to contact me via email ([Alexandra\\_Smith@gmail.com](mailto:Alexandra_Smith@gmail.com)) or phone (724-555-5555) if you require further information or would like to schedule an interview. I appreciate your consideration, and I look forward to speaking with you soon. Sincerely,

*Alexandra D. Smith*

Alexandra D. Smith

(Adapted from Career Services of University of Pennsylvania)

## SAMPLE COVER LETTER

232 School Street  
Indiana, PA 15701

**KYLE M. JONES**  
[www.linkedin.com/in/Kyle.M.Jones](http://www.linkedin.com/in/Kyle.M.Jones)

kylejones@gmail.com  
(724) 111-1111

May 1, 2013

Mr. David Smith  
Non-Profit Organization  
100 10th Street  
Somewhere, FL 34000

Dear Mr. Smith:

I am writing to express my interest in the Non-Profit Organization's Special Outreach Program. As a senior at the Indiana University of Pennsylvania studying history, I was drawn to the Special Outreach Program for its unique approach to social change and by the opportunity to work directly with a non-profit organization while acquiring a better understanding of effective leadership in a socially responsible career.

In both my academic endeavors as well as my extracurricular activities, I have learned to tackle complex problems and reach sound solutions both as an individual decision-maker and as a team member. As the head manager of a student-run organization at IUP, I have honed my ability to assess a situation or conflict as it arises, decide on a course of action, and evaluate its success in the long term. Whether it is finding opportunities for growth through advertising campaigns or streamlining an inefficient system of assistant managerial tasks, I have pushed myself to find new ideas to manage the daily challenges of overseeing an organization. Likewise, my experience on the democratically-run Executive Board of the "Talking About It" series has taught me an invaluable lesson in teamwork. With no formal hierarchy on the Board, I have learned to impart my own suggestions while taking into consideration the advice and counsel of my peers.

My own experience in the nonprofit sector has provided me with an understanding of the specific challenges the field presents, such as funding, strategy implementation, and longevity. Through my internship at Changing Lives for Good, a small nonprofit in Washington DC, I was not only able to address some of these challenges head-on by researching non-federal grant opportunities and preparing applications, but also was introduced to the process of program development. As someone who has been exposed to some of the challenges nonprofits seek help in solving, I am very excited by the opportunity to take an active role in working to identify root causes of systemic problems and learn new skills to develop positive and lasting change.

Ultimately, I see this position as an ideal way to gain a better understanding of the most effective ways of creating sustainable solutions to the critical problems social impact organizations face while improving my own leadership and problem-solving skills. Thank you for taking the time to consider my application. If you would like to contact me, you may contact me by phone (724) 111-1111 or email ([kylejones@gmail.com](mailto:kylejones@gmail.com)). I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

*Kyle M. Jones*

Kyle M. Jones

## **TIPS TO MAKE YOUR COVER LETTER STAND OUT**

- Your cover letter must be focused and specific to the position for which you are applying. The generic, one-size-fits-all approach won't cut it!
- Appearance counts! Make sure margins are even and try to balance the letter on the page, with equal space at the top and bottom.
- Use the same or a similar type font and size as in your resume.
- The font size should be no smaller than 10 point and no larger than 12 point.
- Always address the recipient by his/her title and last name (Mr. Jones or Ms. Smith), even if the person is an acquaintance of long standing.
- Use language that strikes a balance between too formal and too casual. Avoid idioms, colloquialism, and overly causal verbiage.
- Do not use spelling abbreviations ("RU" for "are you") or acronyms ("TY" for "thank you"), even if you are applying online where such shorthand may be more acceptable. Remember, this document determines the all-important first impression you make.
- Pay attention to the qualifications sought in the job posting and highlight the ones that you can offer in your letter.
- Don't be afraid to request an interview. Unless the employer specifically states "no phone calls," you should follow up in about 10-14 days to check on your status and see if you can schedule an interview.
- Be absolutely certain that your letter contains no typos, grammatical errors, or misspellings. This document is not only your first impression, but the employer may also treat it as a sample of your writing skills.

### **SEE OUR OTHER HANDOUTS:**

Résumés  
Interviews  
The Curriculum Vitae  
Federal Resumes  
LinkedIn