University of Portland | Career Center

Cover Letter Checklist

Student name: _____

This checklist is a guide to identifying the fundamental elements of a cover letter.*
1. Proofread your letter for errors and complete the self-review checklist.
2. Have a peer, faculty member or professional review your cover letter – include position description for his/her review.

Please refer to the "Resume and Cover Letters" section of the Career Center website for more information: www.up.edu/career. Additionally, the Career Center library has numerous resources, including sample cover letters.

Self-Review	2nd Review	
		RESEARCH
☐	☐	Demonstrates that you reviewed the position description and company website to identify desired qualifications, skills, and abilities for the position/organization
☐	☐	Specifically tailored for the position and organization; addresses why you are interested in the organization as well why you are a fit for the specific position
☐	☐	Follows all directions in the posting
		INTRODUCTION PARAGRAPH
☐	☐	Identifies the position for which you are applying and describes how you heard about the opening
☐	☐	Specifies if you were referred by a specific person and notes that person by his/her name
☐	☐	Clearly states any connection to the organization, including any interaction you have had with employees and/or recruiters
☐	☐	Briefly highlights why you are interested in the job and organization
☐	☐	The wording is creative and catches an employer's attention quickly
		BODY PARAGRAPH(S)
☐	☐	Identifies your strongest and most relevant qualifications, skills, and abilities and clearly states how they apply to the position
☐	☐	Incorporates keywords from the position description to demonstrate a strong match
☐	☐	Elaborates on why you are interested in the position, organization, industry and/or location
☐	☐	Expands on the experiences in which you developed relevant qualifications, skills, or abilities, providing clear examples that invite the employer to review your résumé – does **not** simply restate what appears on your resume
☐	☐	First sentence of each paragraph summarizes the content of the paragraph – a recruiter may skim the letter
		CLOSING PARAGRAPH
☐	☐	Thanks the reader for taking time to read this letter
☐	☐	Refers the reader to your resume or any other enclosed documents
☐	☐	Reinforces your desire to work for the organization and your fit for the position
☐	☐	Identifies next steps and may describe how you will follow up with the employer in a specific time frame
☐	☐	Contact information is provided again for clarity (if not included in signature)
		CLOSING & SIGNATURE
☐	☐	Ends with a formal closing, such as *Sincerely*, *Regards* or *Best regards* – If your closing contains more than one word, capitalize only the first word, as in *Best regards* or *Sincerely yours*; Be sure to put a comma after your closing
☐	☐	Your full name goes on the next line if you are submitting online or via email – If you are submitting a paper copy, sign your letter and then type your full name
☐	☐	Includes your telephone number and email address on separate lines after your name if you did not include them in the closing paragraph

Self-Review	2nd Review	
		OVERALL FORMAT
☐	☐	Correct business letter format – block and modified block format are standard, each paragraph is single spaced and left justified within the body of the letter with a blank line between paragraphs
☐	☐	Date and your address at top
☐	☐	Includes contact information for organization, including physical address
☐	☐	Addressed to a specific person with a colon (:) at the end of the greeting (not a comma) – Example: *Dear Mr. Smith:* Review organization's website or call to identify the correct addressee if it is not included in posting. If not possible, use *Dear Hiring Manager: Dear Search Committee: or Hello:*
☐	☐	Content is clear, concise, and interesting , as well as personal, warm, and professional
☐	☐	Uses a 10-12 point font size with the same margins and same font style as resume
☐	☐	Letter flows smoothly and has clear transitions between paragraphs
☐	☐	No longer than one page
		SPELLING & GRAMMAR
☐	☐	All the words used are familiar to people; industry-specific terms should be recognizable to those within the field, industry and/or company
☐	☐	All words are spelled correctly – do NOT rely on spell check
☐	☐	Use of capitalization is consistent – if you capitalize the job title or subject, make sure you do it throughout letter
☐	☐	Punctuation used to separate information is consistent

COMMENTS:

How to submit a resume and/or cover letter:

Email as an attachment:
- Save your cover letter, resume and references (if requested) in a common word processing program such as Microsoft Word or as a PDF (preferable). Increasingly, employers are specifying format.
- Give the document a name the employer will associate with you once they are downloaded, for example: SmithJane_Position.pdf.
- In the Subject line, put the name of the position for which you are applying. In your email message, briefly say why you are writing. Ask the employer to contact you about any trouble opening attachment(s).

Send in the body of an email:
- Paste your cover letter a couple of spaces below your brief introduction. Set it up in Business (Block) Style, with everything justified to the left. Your cover letter may need to be reformatted to send it in the body of an email message. Do not use bold, italics, underlining, bullets, fancy fonts, colored text, or multiple columns.
- Attach your resume (in PDF format) to the email.

Mail or submit in person:
- Final cover letters and resumes submitted to employers as paper copies should be printed on resume quality paper (ivory, gray or white) with the watermark right side up, and should not be stapled to other application materials.
- If the cover letter and resume are being sent through the mail, then they should be placed in a large manila envelope or an envelope that matches the resume paper.

Cover Letter Checklist

Applicant Tracking Systems (ATS): You need to format your resume in an ATS-friendly manner

- Title your materials with your name and targeted title: "LastName_Position"
- Remove images, columns, tables, fields, text boxes and graphics so the ATS can quickly scan your text for keywords and phrases. The ATS may not be able to read data placed in images, tables, and text boxes, so it's best to avoid them altogether.
- Remove special characters and avoid creative or fancy bullets that are often illegible to an ATS scanner.
- Avoid special fonts, font treatments and colors. Stick to fonts such as Arial, Georgia, Impact, Courier, Lucinda, Tahoma or Trebuchet, and only use black color. Avoid underlining words, which can mess up the legibility of lower case letters such a g, j or y.
- Avoid templates, which are a combination of fields and tables and can confuse ATS systems. Also, avoid page numbers.
- Save your materials as a basic word document (.doc) or .txt file.

For additional information on submitting through an applicant tracking system, visit the following resources:

- http://www.careerthinker.com/resume-services/resume-advice-tips/resume-distribution/
- http://www.hrbartender.com/2014/recruiting/the-new-resume-rules-infographic-friday-distraction/
- http://www.forbes.com/sites/nextavenue/2014/03/18/how-to-get-your-resume-read-by-an-employer/