

Cover Letter Checklist

- Your letter has the same header (contact info and name) as your résumé. (If not identical, the fonts should match and the graphic elements should coordinate).
- The order of content on the letter is: header (at the top of the page), date, letter recipient's info (name, title, company, address), then salutation (see next bullet).
- The letter is addressed to a specific person! This means no "To Whom It May Concern" or "Dear Sirs." Students should call the company to find out to whom they should address their letters (asking for the "internship coordinator" helps) and —if after calling, no name can be found— when in doubt, send it to the head of the company or department (LinkedIn is a good place to look). That letter WILL be read!
- It starts out with something catchy, such as a reference or accomplishment statement. It does not start with anything along the lines of, "My name is...", "I am a student at...", or "I want to apply for the _____ internship," as these are not intriguing.
 - Reference: Best way to start a letter; the person you are referring to MUST know that you are using his/her name (i.e. "I recently spoke with Senior Account Executive Jim Jones and after our conversation, I know that my background and experience make me a great fit for the ____ position.") You could also use the person you're writing to as the reference, which would happen if you spoke to the internship coordinator (e.g. "Thank you for taking the time to speak with me on Tuesday about your production internship.").
 - Accomplishment: Does not have to be groundbreaking, just has to show that the person has experience doing what the company is looking for (i.e. "As lifestyle editor of The Daily Orange, I know what it takes to...").
- The first paragraph actually mentions what specific internship you're applying for (e.g. "the media relations internship" [good] vs. "interning" [very bad]).
 - Good: "My previous internship experience and coursework have made me a great candidate for the photo editor internship with XYZ Magazine."
 - Bad: "I truly enjoy the fast paced environment of the magazine industry and am interested in interning at XYZ Magazine." (Reminder: In addition to "interning" being too general, remember that your angle is what you can do for the company— not the other way around— so your letter shouldn't focus on how you would benefit.)
- The first paragraph can have a transition statement at the end (e.g. "I am confident that my time management skills coupled with my previous experience writing for a fast-paced publication make me an excellent candidate for this position."), but this is not necessary. Only write a closing sentence here if it doesn't feel forced. Overall, the first paragraph should be rather short.
- The second paragraph (or second and third, if —for clarity's sake— it is necessary to break this section into two paragraphs) shows why the person is a good fit with three examples. How to do this successfully:
 1. Look at the job description. It will be very straightforward with the type of qualities the perfect candidate will possess (e.g. "XYZ Agency is looking for a candidate with excellent written and oral communications skills, the ability to multitask and experience using Final Cut Pro."). There will likely be several desired qualities and past experience listed. Make a note of three qualities/past experience/

abilities listed that you know you can speak to.

2. Look at your résumé. Find parallels between what you have done and what the job is looking for (e.g. you may not have specifically done any media relations, but have experience in calling people from a previous sales position).

3. Check to make sure you are not falling into the trap of just reiterating what is on your résumé. It's the difference between "telling" and "showing." This is tricky. Here's the difference between telling ("I worked here, I did this.") and citing your experience to demonstrate you have a particular quality (cites experience to demonstrate a specific quality (the one from the job/internship description)).

- Quality : Writing ability

Telling: "While working at The Daily Orange, I wrote articles and copyedited."

Showing: "As a copyeditor at The Daily Orange, I wrote and edited articles weekly, which strengthened my ability to produce well-written work on deadline.

The Difference: "Showing" illustrates that the person has been there before and will be able to jump right in, while "telling" just restates bullets from the résumé.

- Quality: Previous advertising experience

Telling: "As advertising coordinator, I call potential advertisers daily and sell ad space."

Showing: "As advertising coordinator, I head up all advertising outreach for the publication and single-handedly increased revenue by 25 percent."

The Difference: "Showing" gives results, demonstrating the previous experience; "telling" is again just restating résumé fodder.

You'll notice that showing these qualities is a little more general than what is on your résumé. That's ok. The résumé is a detailed explanation of what you did; a cover letter REFERENCES those experience to show why the person is a good fit for a job. In this way, it "paints in broader strokes." In short: Make sure that you are briefly citing your past experiences and that you are specific in naming which quality or skill you gained in the process.

- The last paragraph should be proactive, using the "Ask & Action" method (e.g. "I would like to speak with you about my qualifications [ASK] and will call you within the week to see if we can arrange a time to speak [ACTION].").
- The last paragraph does NOT ask to be contacted or express that you "hope to hearing from" the company. This is being passive! The one exception is if the company specifically notes "no phone calls." In that case, you could thank the reader for his/her time and state, "I look forward to hearing from you."
- If the letter is being sent electronically, there should not be extra room for a signature— just your name following the closing ("Sincerely", etc.). If the letter is being sent in hardcopy, a handwritten signature above the typed one is appropriate. You also do not need to note enclosures on your letter when sending materials electronically.