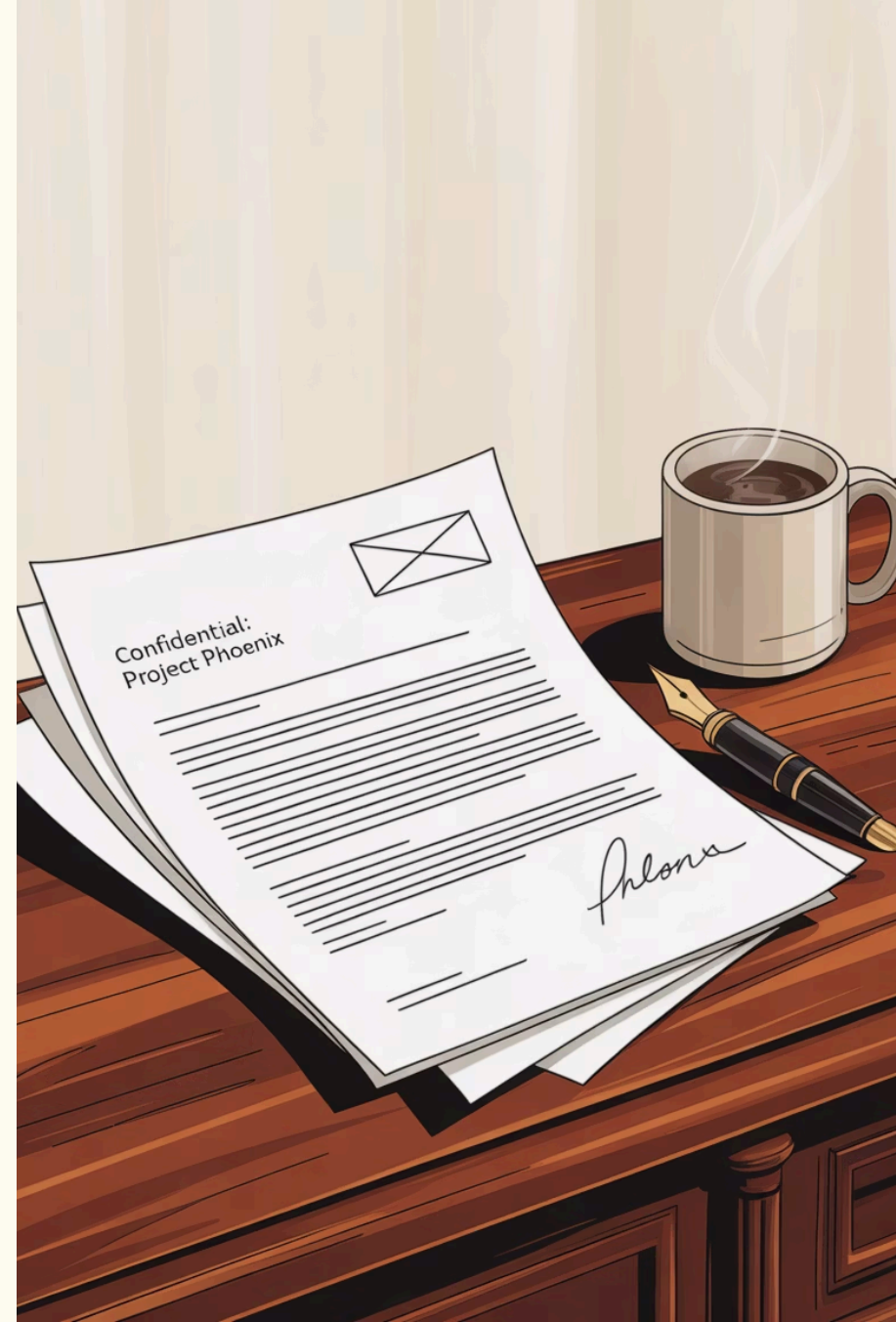


How to Craft a Cover Letter to Stand Out from the Competition

Learn the art of writing compelling cover letters that land internships and job opportunities.





Header & Layout

1 Consistent Branding

Your cover letter header should match your résumé. Use identical fonts, colors, and graphic elements to create a cohesive professional look. This consistency demonstrates attention to detail and reinforces your brand across all application materials.

2 Proper Content Order

Structure your letter with this precise order: your header at the top, current date, recipient's complete contact information (name, title, company, full address), followed by the appropriate salutation.

Header

Ian Cobb

← Name and contact info coordinate (if not match identically) the header on your résumé

myfullname@email.com | 555.585.8432 | @myfullname | linkedin.com/in/myfullname | Syracuse, NY

← A few blank lines

August 2, 2023

← 1 or 2 blank lines

Jill Murphy, Recruiter
Work for Us, Inc.
1 Employer Drive
Somewhereville, NY 13251

Since it is unclear on how the person identifies, or if you know the person is non-binary, start your letter with “Dear Jill Murphy:” (i.e. use first and last without the gendered title).

← 2 blank lines

Dear Jill Murphy:

← 1 blank line

↑ all info aligned to the left





Address It to a Real Person

Generic salutations like "To Whom It May Concern" or "Dear Sirs" signal lazy research and lack of genuine interest. Successful applicants invest time in finding the right person to contact.



Call the Company

Contact the organization directly and ask for the "internship coordinator" or hiring manager's name. Most receptionists will provide this information.



Research on LinkedIn

Use LinkedIn to identify department heads, HR managers, or other relevant contacts within the organization.



Aim High When Uncertain

If no specific name emerges from your research, address your letter to the department head or company president. Senior executives ensure your letter gets to HR.

Hook Them From the Start

Your opening line determines whether hiring managers continue reading. Avoid bland introductions that waste precious attention spans.

Strong Reference Opening

"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 marketing internship position."

Key: The referrer must know you're using their name. This creates immediate credibility and connection.

Accomplishment Hook

"As lifestyle editor of The Daily Orange, I know what it takes to manage multiple deadlines while maintaining editorial quality standards."

Key: Demonstrates relevant experience without being overly dramatic. Shows you can do what they need.

⊗ **Never start with:** "My name is...", "I am a student at...", or "I want to apply for..." These openings are a deal breaker because it is instantly forgettable and show no creativity or strategic thinking.

Be Specific About the Position

Your first paragraph must clearly identify the exact role you're seeking. Vague language suggests you're mass-applying without genuine interest.

"My previous internship experience and coursework have made me a great candidate for the **photo editor internship** with XYZ Magazine."

Why it works: Specific position title, focuses on what you offer them

"I truly enjoy the fast-paced environment of the magazine industry and am interested in **interning** at XYZ Magazine."

Why it fails: Too general, focuses on your benefits instead of theirs

Keep your first paragraph concise. Add a transition statement only if it feels natural, not forced. Remember: your angle is what you can do for the company, not what they can do for you.

Cover Letter vs. Résumé Roles

Cover Letter's Role: Big Picture



Your cover letter 'paints in broader strokes,' presenting a compelling narrative of why you're an ideal fit, demonstrating passion and potential.

Résumé's Role: Specific Details



In contrast, your résumé offers detailed explanations of your achievements, responsibilities, and specific actions taken in previous roles.

Prove Your Fit With Three Examples

The second paragraph (sometimes split into two for clarity) demonstrates why you're the ideal candidate using three strategic examples. This requires careful analysis and preparation.



Analyze the Job Description

Study the posting carefully. Look for explicit requirements like "excellent written communication skills," "ability to multitask," or "experience with Final Cut Pro." Note three qualities you can authentically address.



Mine Your Experience

Review your résumé for relevant parallels. You may not have direct media relations experience, but your sales position involved calling people and building relationships—that's transferable communication experience.

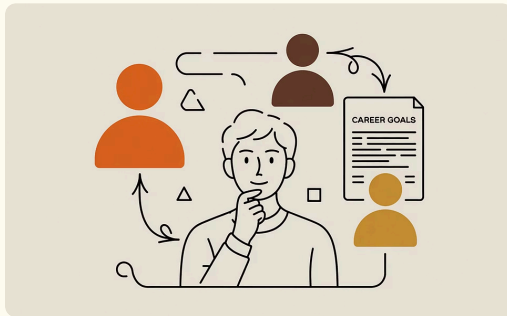


Show, Don't Tell

Avoid simply restating résumé bullets. Instead, cite specific experiences to demonstrate particular qualities. This subtle difference separates professional communicators from amateur applicants.

Connect Your Experience to Their Needs

Strategically highlight how your background aligns with job requirements using focused examples.



Identify Parallels

Find clear links between your past experiences and the specific requirements of the job description.



Highlight Transferable Skills

Showcase how skills from previous roles can be effectively applied to the new position, even if the industries differ.



Focus on Key Qualities

Concentrate on demonstrating 2-3 essential qualities or competencies explicitly mentioned in the job description.



Cite Concise Examples

Provide brief, impactful examples that clearly illustrate the developed skill for each point you make.

Pro Tip: Make sure you're not falling into the trap of just reiterating résumé content. The difference between "telling" and "showing" separates amateur from professional communication.

Master the Art of "Showing"

Quality: Writing Ability

✗ Telling (Weak)

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

Problem: Simply restates résumé bullets without demonstrating impact or capability.

The Key Difference: "Showing" illustrates that you've successfully handled similar situations before and can jump right into their environment. It proves capability rather than just listing duties.

✓ Showing (Strong)

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

Success: Demonstrates proven ability to handle similar challenges they face.

Professional Writing Skills Demonstration



Demonstrate Results, Not Just Activities

Quality: Previous Advertising Experience

Telling (Ineffective)

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

Issue: Describes daily tasks without demonstrating success or impact. Anyone could write this generic description.

Showing (Powerful)

"As advertising coordinator, I head up all advertising outreach for the publication and singlehandedly increased revenue by 25 percent."

Impact: Provides concrete results that prove effectiveness. Shows leadership and measurable success.

Notice how "showing" examples are slightly more general than résumé details, but they're strategically focused on results and transferable skills. Your cover letter should briefly cite experiences while being specific about the qualities and skills you developed through them.



End With Action, Not Hope

Your closing paragraph must be proactive. Passive endings suggest you lack confidence and initiative.



The Ask & Action Method

"I would like to speak with you about my qualifications and will call you within the week to see if we can arrange a time to speak."

Formula: State what you want + commit to specific follow-up action



Avoid Passive Language

"I hope to hear from you" or "Please contact me." This puts the burden on them and suggests you lack initiative.

Exception: If posting says "no phone calls," thank them and state "I look forward to hearing from you."

Remember: Great cover letters demonstrate the same proactive leadership qualities you'll bring to the internship. Take charge of the process from start to finish.