



BRIDGEWATER

STATE UNIVERSITY

Expect More. Achieve More.

Writing an Effective Cover Letter



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Introduction and Tips

What is a Cover Letter?

It is a letter of introduction that highlights your key accomplishments and qualifications for a specific job opening.

What is a Letter of Inquiry?

It is a cover letter that inquires about potential internship or job opportunities within a specific company/organization.

Cover Letter Tips



- Make a good first impression. The cover letter is the first contact you will have with a potential employer. If it is well written, your letter will lead the reader to your resume. If your letter is poorly written or produced, the employer may not even take time to review your resume.
- Put yourself in the shoes of the hiring manager. If you were doing the hiring, what attributes would the ideal candidate for this job possess? The perfect candidate would demonstrate interest in and knowledge of your particular company or organization.
- Present yourself as the perfect candidate. Imagine your cover letter as a marketing tool, much like a television commercial. Effective commercials catch your attention by highlighting only the most attractive features of a product.
- Be brief. You should avoid detailing your entire work history. The best way to distinguish yourself is to highlight one or two of your accomplishments or abilities that show you are an above-average candidate for the position. Stressing only a few unique attributes increases your chances of being remembered by the recruiter and getting to the interview stage where you can elaborate on the rest of your accomplishments.
- Researching each employer promises to be much more effective than sending out hundreds of cover letters and resumes. In effect you are saying to employers, "This is where I want to work. I have done my research and I am confident in my decision."
- Never send out a resume without a cover letter.
- Address your cover letter specifically to the person by name and title who will most likely be interviewing for the job you have in mind.
 - Call Human Resources to ask for this information.
 - If you are answering a blind advertisement- one in which the employer is not specified- you can address your letter "Dear Search Committee", "Dear Human Resources" or "Dear Hiring Manager."
 - Avoid writing "To Whom It May Concern."

- The cover letter should be neat, contain no typos, misspellings or errors in grammar. Employers judge you on your ability to communicate and your ability to manage the presentation of information; a cover letter does both.
- Use 8 1/2 x 11 paper allowing a border of at least one inch. This allows space for the reader to make notes.
- Use the same quality paper as your resume. Use a matching envelope as well.
- Use the same font as your resume. Use a clear type face large enough to allow easy reading. Avoid script and other exotic fonts.
- Individualize your cover letter. Each cover letter you write will have a somewhat different slant, depending on what skills are important to the needs of the particular employer.
 - Whenever possible do some research on the organization or company before you write your cover letter.
 - Read annual reports, product brochures or contact people in the organization. Keep it to four or five paragraphs but no longer than one page.
- Always close your cover letter with a request for an interview.
 - "I am eager to discuss this opportunity with you further in an interview."
 - You can also suggest a specific time or reason, such as: "I will call you the week of May 22nd to discuss the interviewing process and your timetable for hiring."
- Make a record and keep a copy of each letter and resume you send.
- When emailing your cover letter and resume, state the position you are applying for in the subject line. You can write your cover letter directly into your email message and attach your resume. Or, if you prefer, you can attach both your resume and cover letter. If you decide to do the later be sure to write a professional email message indicating your interest in the position and that you have attached your cover letter and resume for consideration.



The pages that follow provide additional guidelines and samples for you. Once you have a draft cover letter written, call to set up an appointment with one of the Career Services staff to have it critiqued or take advantage of our Monday - Thursday Drop-In Hours from 11:00 am – 2:00 pm

Cover Letter Guidelines



Your Address

Date

Contact Person's Name

Title

Name of Organization

Address

City, State and Zip Code

Dear Dr./Mr./Ms. _____:

Section 1: Position Title / How did I learn about this opportunity

The opening paragraph explains why you are writing the letter. State your purpose, identifying the position you are applying for and how you learned about the opening. If you are responding to an advertisement, state the name and date of the publication where you saw the advertisement. If a well-respected person referred you to the organization, mention the person's name and briefly explain your connection.

Section 2: "It's All about Me" / Selling my Skills!

Here is where you tailor your cover letter to a particular job. Tell the employer why you are a strong candidate for this position by highlighting relevant achievements, skills, and/or experience. A good way to approach this is to select 2-3 skills and/or experiences that directly relate to the position. If you are changing careers, emphasize your transferable skills. Show how your past experience has contributed to making you a strong contender in your new field.

Section 3: "It's all about the Employer" / Do my Research!

To demonstrate your motivation, we suggest researching the organization and including your findings in the cover letter. This can include highlighting your interest in the company's mission, special projects, programs or recent news highlights. Two or three sentences about the company is sufficient.

Additionally, this paragraph can be included if there is further information that adds strength to your qualifications and has not been mentioned on your resume or needs to be described in more detail (for example, a special project you undertook in a previous job or in your community).

Section 4: Closing Paragraph / Ask for an interview and Leave my Telephone/Cell Number(s)

Employers will not automatically contact you once you have sent your cover letter and resume, so be sure to state how and when they may contact you (including phone number and email address). The final paragraph can be action oriented (request an interview). Finally, thank the person for considering your candidacy and mention that you are looking forward to meeting him or her.

Sincerely,

Your signature (if sent by mail)

Your full name (typed)

Enclosure: Resume

Letter of Inquiry Guidelines



Your Address

Date

Contact Person's Name

Title

Name of Organization

Address

City, State Zip Code

Dear Dr./Mr./Ms. _____:

Section 1

Briefly introduce yourself and indicate that you are inquiring about the availability of an internship or job. Mention how you identified their organization and why you are interested in their organization.

Section 2

Tell the employer why you would be a strong candidate for a position within their organization by highlighting relevant achievements, skills, and/or experience(s).

Section 3

This paragraph can be included if there is further information that adds strength to your qualifications and has not been mentioned on your resume or needs to be described in more detail (for example, a special project you undertook in a previous job or in your community).

Section 4

Reference your enclosed/attached resume that highlights your experience. State when and how you may be reached (including phone number and email address) if they have questions about your application. Mention that you will follow up with them to see if they have any anticipated vacancies and how your skills can benefit their organization. Finally, thank the person for their time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Your signature (if sent by mail)

Your full name (typed)

Enclosure: Resume

Sample Job Cover Letter 1

123 Fairhaven Way
Lexington, MA 02072

May 15, 2010

Ms. Colleen Gramacki
Human Resources Manager
McKeith & Company, Inc.
One Preston Park Plaza, Suite 2000
Boston, MA 02101

Dear Ms. Gramacki:

Recently I spoke with Mr. John Edison from the Finance Department of McKeith & Company. He strongly recommended that I submit my resume for the position of Financial Analyst. Knowing the requirements of the position he suggested, I would be an ideal candidate for your consideration.

Collectively my academic and employment experiences have prepared me well for a career with McKeith & Company. My challenging and competitive academic program has included a strong foundation in auditing, capital budgeting, financial analysis, risk management and investments. I have developed keen quantitative, analytical and problem solving skills in both the classroom and on the job.

In addition to my classroom experience, I have worked in the field of banking and tax preparation. My knowledge includes familiarity with the environments of a large diversified financial services company and a small Certified Public Accounting firm. Customer service and relationship building have been key components of my employment. I have a proven record of addressing the client's needs while achieving company goals.

As I was doing research off of your website, I came across your Spring 2010 newsletter and was impressed to learn that McKeith is expanding its operation to three new locations in New England. I would like to be part of the "McKeith Team" and be a member of your organization that is growing and prides itself on "superior customer service".

Enclosed is a copy of my resume highlighting in detail my education and work history. I would like to meet with you, at your earliest convenience, for an interview appointment. Please feel free to contact me at (508)111-1234 or via email at cmichaels@email.edu if you need any further information regarding my candidacy. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Your signature

Christina Michaels

Enclosures: Resume and References

Sample Job Cover Letter 2

2728 Lindenshire Road
Apartment 231
Taunton, MA 02780

April 14, 2010

Ms. Melissa Stephens
Human Resources Director
Community Care Family Services
111 Main Street
Norwood, MA 02062

Dear Ms. Stephens:

Your advertised position of Mental Health Counselor, which I learned about through the Career Services Office at Bridgewater State University, intrigued me. Enclosed is my resume for your consideration.

I will be graduating in May from Bridgewater State University with a Bachelor of Science degree in Social Work with a minor in Criminology. Having successfully completed four years in a rigorous curriculum and having worked in a mental health setting before, I am confident that I will succeed in the position of Mental Health Counselor. While at Bridgewater State Hospital, I instructed patients on proper personal hygiene and organized recreational and educational activities. In addition, I observed individual and group therapy sessions and supported medical and correctional staffs. I am certified in CPR and have completed two self-defense courses.

Currently, I am working in the Girls Secure Detention Unit at the Old Colony YMCA where I provide a secure environment for twenty-two residents ages 11-18. On a daily basis I assist residents in developing important life skills and act as a positive role model. This position allows me to further develop my counseling and interpersonal communications skills.

As I was researching your organization, I was impressed with the variety of programs that you provide to the local community such as your Children's Therapeutic Day Activity Programs. Because of my current work with at-risk youth, I am especially excited about the opportunity to work with your afterschool program which has been providing excellent mentorship opportunities to this population for years.

I will call you in a week to verify that my materials were received. Please feel free to call me at 508-824-7894 or via email at emartinez@email.edu if you have any questions about my candidacy. I can be reached every afternoon after 3:00 pm and I am eager to set up an interview. I appreciate your time and consideration. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Your signature

Elena Martinez

Enclosure: Resume

Sample Job Cover Letter 3

MARK JONES

22 South Street, Bridgewater, MA 02324 • (508) 555-1212 • mjones@aol.com

May 24, 2010

Dr. Francis J. Smith
Superintendent of Schools
Braintree Public Schools
124 Washington Street
Braintree, MA 02345

Dear Dr. Smith:

Please accept the enclosed resume in application for the position of First Grade Teacher at the Braintree Elementary School. I learned about this opportunity in the May 23, 2010 edition of the *Boston Globe* and am excited to learn more about the position.

My educational background, volunteer work and student teaching experience would make me an excellent addition to your teaching staff. Bridgewater State University has prepared me well with a strong understanding of cognitive development in children. Teaching in diverse school settings such as urban, multi-cultural, and multi-lingual classrooms has exposed me to variety of learning styles and techniques. Student teaching allowed me to bring together the theoretical and the practical in a dynamic learning environment.

While at Central Elementary School, I developed a thematic unit on Native American culture incorporating hands-on activities. The class was of diverse ethnic backgrounds and levels of ability challenging me to be innovative in meeting the needs of all students. One of the highlights of my student teaching experience was my involvement in the after-school program. As a committee member, I offered creative ideas for developing activities for this state-funded enrichment program. As a program volunteer, I assisted students with homework assignments and self-esteem building activities. It was rewarding for me to be an organizing member of this valuable program.

The Braintree Elementary School's interest in addressing the issue of after-school programming is a subject I would like to pursue. Your Braintree Extended Enrichment Program (BEEP) is a model of what good broad-based after-hours curriculum can be. I would be honored to assist you with this growing program.

I welcome the opportunity to discuss how my qualifications would benefit the Braintree School District. I will call you in one week to discuss the interviewing process and your timetable for hiring. If you have any questions regarding my application before then, please feel free to contact me at 508-555-1212 or via email at mjones@email.edu. Thank you in advance for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Your signature

Mark Jones

Sample Internship Cover Letter

123 Main Street
Bridgewater, MA 02324
(508) 555-1234

May 1, 2010

Dr. Ed Science
Lab Supervisor
Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection
One Winter Street
Boston, MA 02108

Dear Dr. Science:

It is with great excitement that I apply for the Science Research Summer Internship position at Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (MassDep) that was listed on the Bridgewater State University Career Services Internship Database. I believe such an opportunity would provide me with the practical experience that I am seeking to further develop the skills that I have gained through my coursework and lab experience at Bridgewater State University.

Currently, I am a junior seeking a Bachelor of Science degree in Chemistry/Geology. My laboratory experience in chemistry, biology and geology, as well as my courses in geochemistry, biochemistry, instrumental analysis and quantitative chemical analysis would prove to be useful in a position at Massachusetts Department of Environmental protection. During my time in the Bridgewater State University lab, I have performed chemical reactions and am currently using microscopes to observe many specimens. I have also had the opportunity to conduct outdoor labs to access water chemistry.

I was very impressed to learn that the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (MassDep) was in the top 3 for the "most green" organizations in Massachusetts. It would be a true honor to intern at such a renowned organization. I have dreamed about working for MassDep since Governor Patrick signed into law the Global Warming Solutions Act back in August of 2008.

I will call you next week to confirm appropriate next steps. Should you have any questions before that time, you can reach me at (508) 555-1234 or via email at medwards@email.edu. Thank you in advance for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Your signature

Michael Edwards

Sample Internship Letter of Inquiry

44 Maple Avenue
Lakeville, MA 02347
(508) 555-5555

April 15, 2010

Andrea Batalon
Social Worker
Massachusetts Department of Children and Families
Mill River Place
1 Washington Street
Taunton, MA 02780

Dear Mrs. Batalon:

Currently I am a junior at Bridgewater State University working toward a Bachelor of Arts degree in Psychology and am interested in obtaining a social service internship for the summer. After visiting your website and becoming aware of the fact that 10,000 children are in foster care across the state and more than 40,000 children are served by the Massachusetts Department of Children and Families (DCF), I am confident that I can contribute my skills and experience in a beneficial and meaningful way. Completing an internship with your organization will enable me to gain valuable hands-on experience. Enclosed please find a copy of my resume for your consideration.

My academic and student learning experiences have prepared me well for an internship with the Department of Children and Families. My curriculum thus far has included courses in the areas of Child Psychology, Adolescent Psychology, Developmental Psychology and Clinical Psychology. In addition to my coursework, I also had the opportunity to do a service learning project set up through Bridgewater State University in a special needs classroom at the Assawompsett Elementary School in Lakeville, MA. During this time, I worked with a 5 year old student diagnosed with Asperger's Syndrome. My main function was to encourage social interaction and eye contact in small groups with classmates, provide one-on-one instruction through the use of visual aids such as daily calendars and checklists, and reinforce appropriate behavior through praise and a reward system.

I would greatly appreciate the opportunity to talk to you about any internship possibilities at the Massachusetts Department of Children and Families (DCF). I will call you next week to follow up. If you have questions or comments regarding my inquiry prior to this time, please contact me at (508) 555-5555 or via email at Ktaylor@email.edu. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Your signature

Kerry Taylor

Enclosure: Resume