

# Cover letters

any time you send a resume or application to an employer, you should include a cover letter. Whenever you're not face-to-face with an employer, **your cover letter is your introduction.**

## ✓ the overview

- ▶ Write a separate cover letter for every position. **The best letters are customized** for the employer receiving them.
- ▶ Since your resume talks about you, use your cover letter to demonstrate you've done your research and **show an employer how you're the best candidate for them.** This means talking about *them* and how you're a fit for what *they* need.
- ▶ Demonstrate a **professional, clear, and direct writing style** while also expressing your interest and excitement.
- ▶ As with your resume, your cover letter is a writing sample. Proofreading for grammatical and spelling errors, typos, and content/style is just as important. **Mistakes can wreck your chances** of moving forward.
- ▶ Think of your cover letter like a response to a personal ad—you're connecting your interests and experiences with the other person —**being genuine, conveying interest, showing that you understand what's important to them, and sharing their values.** You don't have to tell them your life story—you're telling them enough to convince them to invite you to an interview to learn more.

## ✓ the details

- ▶ **Your resume and cover letter should match** in both style and appearance.
- ▶ Fold them together and mail in a matching envelope or, because employers are scanning resumes, send your cover letter and resume unfolded in a large envelope.
- ▶ If you're emailing your resume as an attachment, it's not necessary to also attach a cover letter. The email message itself serves as a cover letter. Write it accordingly.
- ▶ If you're applying online, don't forget to include a cover letter, even if it's optional.
- ▶ Address the letter to a specific individual. You may need to do some extra research, but it makes a big difference.

## ✓ a helpful tip

If you are having difficulty getting the tone of your cover letter right, you're not alone. Many job seekers struggle with cover letters that sound artificial or too impersonal. If you find yourself in that situation, try this:

- ▶ Write a letter to someone you know well—a parent, friend, advisor, professor, former teacher. Tell them about the position you are applying for, how you found it, why you are interested/excited, why you think you would be a good candidate, what parts of the job you would especially enjoy, and what you know and like about the employer.
- ▶ Now that you have a letter that sounds like *you*, put it into cover letter format, fill in any pieces that are missing, and edit the language to make it a little more professional/formal if needed. It's much easier to make something informal sound more formal than the other way around.

1 Avery Black  
9876 Farrington Ct., Apt. E  
East Lansing, MI 48823  
231-123-4567 / averyb@msu.edu

2 April 2, 2015

3 Cameron Sullivan  
National Events Manager  
Crohn's & Colitis Foundation of America  
386 Park Avenue South  
17th Floor  
New York, NY 10016

4 Dear Ms. Sullivan,

5 I am writing regarding the Take Steps Walk Manager position located in Detroit, MI. As a psychology major, I am attracted to a career where I can use my strong communication skills to directly help people. This position would allow me to coordinate with many people in order to plan successful Walks, supporting the CCFA's goal of improving Crohn's & Colitis patients' lives through research. Being very familiar with your organization personally and in networking with the Gastrointestinal Student Group that I lead at Michigan State University, I was excited to see the listing for this position on idealist.org.

6 This opportunity would be an excellent fit for both my personality and skills. As reflected on my resume, in my recent internship at NorthWest Initiative, I had the opportunity to plan a neighborhood conference from the ground up, which involved honing many important event-planning skills such as those you are seeking in a Walk Manager: developing a promotional plan to publicize the event, working within budgets and timelines, mobilizing local business leaders and residents to volunteer their time and money, and maintaining current databases to track and record the progress of the event. I learned first-hand many challenges that nonprofits face, and also how vital meaningful relationships with individuals and other groups are to making an organization sustainable.

Of particular relevance to CCFA, I also currently serve as Social Chair of MSU GISI (Gastrointestinal Student Initiative) where I plan regular social and educational meetings for students with Crohn's and Colitis. As with the Walk Manager position, this role requires heavy reliance on networking among and outside of the group. When we participated in the Take Steps Walk at Camp Dearborn last year, I was Team Captain for MSU GISI, and I am looking forward to the event again this year.

7 Thank you for your time and attention to my application. I look forward to scheduling an interview with you to discuss the position, as well as my qualifications and commitment to your cause. An opportunity to contribute to an organization whose mission I already support would be an excellent next step in my career path.

Sincerely,

8 *Avery Black*

9 Avery Black

10 Enclosure

6 BODY PARAGRAPH(S). Be specific about why you are interested in the position and show your enthusiasm. Briefly summarize some of your strongest qualifications to do the work. Consider this from the employer's point of view by linking your skills to specific requirements in the job description. Show what you have to offer the employer; don't just daydream about what the employer can offer you.

7 CLOSING PARAGRAPH(S). Refer the reader to the resume (or application form) you are enclosing. Declare your interest in an interview and offer to provide further documentation upon request.

8 SIGNATURE.

9 YOUR NAME (typed).

10 ENCLOSURE (your resume).

## ✓ parts of a cover letter

1 YOUR NAME, ADDRESS, PHONE NUMBER, and EMAIL ADDRESS. Can be formatted in standard business letter format or as it appears on your resume.

2 DATE.

3 CONTACT & ADDRESS. Use an individual's name, whenever possible.

4 SALUTATION.

5 FIRST PARAGRAPH. State the reason you are writing, explain the type of work you are interested in, or the specific position you are applying for, and indicate how you learned about the employer and/or the opening.

## Dalia Levine

1 123 Grand River Ave, East Lansing, MI 48823 | cell 248.987.6543 | dalia.levine@msu.edu

2 February 24, 2015

3 Yakov Shiri  
Yad Vashem Internship Coordinator  
Yad Vashem  
Har Hazikaron P.O.B. 3477  
Jerusalem 91034 Israel

4 Dear Mr. Shiri,

5 I would like to be considered for The Yad Vashem Museum Internship. I am attracted to a career in museums and art collections with emphasis on archives and preservation, and educating the public about these resources. My professor at Michigan State University recommended your organization, and I learned of this position through the Yad Vashem Museum website.

A position in the Central Database for Shoah Victims' Names would be a great fit for me. I enjoy researching articles of historical relevance, educating people about history and its value, and organizing material in an efficient and easily accessible manner. I would love to assist the Database staff in expanding Yad Vashem's archives by entering and editing data.

6 I'm especially enthusiastic about being a part of an organization that is devoted to the many histories intertwined within the Holocaust. Currently pursuing a specialization in Jewish Studies, I have taken upper-level and honors courses in Jewish history, literature, and culture. One class in particular stressed the importance of having readily available and reliable information to help individuals understand Judaism and Jewish history. While learning about many worldwide misunderstandings regarding the Jewish faith, I have realized how important it is to have organizations such as Yad Vashem provide accurate information to visitors.

7 Thank you for your time and consideration. I look forward to scheduling an interview with your organization via phone or Skype to further discuss the position and my background. I am confident that my experiences in administrative roles, as a volunteer in Israel, and as a student will enable me to make a valuable contribution to your program.

Sincerely,

8 *Dalia Levine*

9 Dalia Levine

10 Enclosure