



Goals for Cover Letters, Application Essays, and Resumés

Sample templates are at the end of the document.

The cover letter should:

- Be succinct (no more than one page)
- Highlight important experiences from the resume
- Indicate the position applied for
- Indicate how the applicant learned about the position
- Explain how the applicant's qualifications match the job requirements
- Give FULL contact information, including phone number, address, email, web page URL, and fax number

Check list for the cover letter:

- ✓ Follows business letter format
- ✓ Addressed to a person, not a position (do some research to find a name)
- ✓ Position specifically identified immediately
- ✓ Indicate how the applicant learned about the position
- ✓ Briefly mentions all key job requirements
- ✓ Link experiences/achievements to job requirements
- ✓ Does applicant talk about what he/she can do for employer
- ✓ Well-written and error-free (run spell check in Word, not Google Docs)
- ✓ One typed page maximum
- ✓ Well laid-out on the page
- ✓ Good stock of paper used if submitting in print, not electronically

The resumé should:

- Be well organized
- Be succinct
- Highlight special skills, talents, assignments with job experience
- Mention all awards and achievements
- Play up relationships between work experience and requirements for job sought
- Include a clear, pithy objective
- Not include complete sentences under each job or relevant experience.
 - Each bullet should start with a verb and the verb tense should make it clear whether or not you're working the job currently or it was in the past

Checklist for the resumé:

- ✓ The resume should be pleasing to the eye and balanced on the page
- ✓ If graphics are used, they must be restrained and appropriate to the position for which you are applying
- ✓ All necessary information must be included:
 - Name
 - Contact information
 - Objective
 - Education
 - Relevant experiences
 - Awards, achievements
 - Certifications (CPR, licensing, etc.)
- ✓ All unnecessary should be excluded (age, gender, race, height, weight, number of children, marital status, political/religious affiliation)¹
- ✓ All of your jobs/ relevant should be separated, chronologically organized with the most recent first, and have 3-4 duties listed under each.
- ✓ For more recent graduates and those still in school, your resume should be one page only.
 - As you go along, you may be encouraged to add more, leading to two or three pages
- ✓ Your objective should be short and directly addressed to the position sought?
 - Avoid language which sets your bar low: "to seek an entry-level position..."; aim your objective towards a long-term career goal
- ✓ Your education and work experience entries should be listed in reverse chronological order (with the most-recent in each category first)
- ✓ Check to make sure you have included all relevant experiences and explained their relevancy adequately with the bullet points
- ✓ Make sure to eliminate wordiness. The bullet points should not be complete sentences.
- ✓ Have you run spell check, asked someone else to read it over, and made certain it represents you and your experiences fairly and accurately? If you haven't, make sure to do so at the Hart Career Center and the Writing Center in Ames Library.

The **application essay** is sometimes required when applying to undergraduate or graduate schools, particularly if you're looking at getting some fellowships or scholarships. Often the "task" of these essays is not well-defined, so it's up to the writer to create a text which will be persuasive for an admissions officer.

(Please note, we do have a separate source on personal statements available on our webpage under "General Tips for Personal Statements.")

- It should focus on who you are.
- Why you are interested in this particular university.
- What your course of study will undertake (broadly defined).

¹ This information is also information they should not ask you about during a job interview. You do not have to answer questions about this information.

Checklist for application essays:

- ✓ The beginning of the essay should include an introduction which directly relates to the program for which the writer is applying. It must be clear that the information in the essay relates to the school (or program if you're doing a common application).
 - ✓ This introduction should be interesting and engaging without being flamboyant or excessive in order to catch your readers' attention early on.
 - ✓ The tone of your essay should be sincere and honest. Don't exaggerate accomplishments but don't exaggerate mistakes and challenges, either.
 - ✓ If a specific question has been posed in the prompt the school offers, make certain you have answered it completely. Ask another set of eyes to look at this point in particular.
 - ✓ Provide a clear narrative to back up points you make about yourself. What stories can you tell to show who you are? What experiences should you highlight?
 - ✓ If you're crunched for space—most applications allow only one, single-spaced, typed page—consider cutting extraneous details which could be cut from the essay.
 - Look for information which leads readers away from the main point, you!
 - ✓ Have you (skillfully) integrated mentions of some awards or distinction without appearing to brag?
 - ✓ Use your conclusion reiterate the connection between your background and the criteria of the program to which you are applying.
 - ✓ Run spell check, ask someone else to read it, and make sure it's free of errors.
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Cover Letter Template:

[Your Name
The number and street of your address
The city, state, and zip code of your address
Your phone number and email]

[The Date]

Hello [The person to whom you are writing],

A polite greeting. (1-2 sentences)

A brief explanation of why you're writing and the job in which you are interested in. (2-3 sentences)

An overview of a few key skills you possess (skills you mention in your resume) and how these skills align with the job description. Don't restate the job description! (4-6 sentences).

Thank the reader for their time, tell them you are excited to discuss this opportunity further, and invite them to ask you any questions they have (1-2 sentences).

Signed,

[Your signature]
Your typed name

Resumé Template:

Your Name—Your Address—Your Email—Your Phone Number

Resume Objective:

[What is your purpose in creating this resume? Don't use first person—I, me, my—keep it formal: To obtain a job in [field] that encourages [development of some skills, challenges, and/or advancement] and allows for the use of the following skills.

Skills:

[What are your best skills in the field to which you are applying: Time Management, Commitment to Others, Familiar with Microsoft 365, etc.]

Education:

[Put your high school and/ or college, your degree, and the year you graduated. The most recent should go first. You do not need to include any form of a GPA unless asked.]

Relevant Work Experience:

[List three to four relevant jobs—if you have that many, don't panic if you do not—and give three to four bullet points under each explaining what the job entailed. See the example below. Start with your most recent job. Watch your verb tense. Do not use periods at the end of each bullet.]

Company A: Public Relations Intern

Spring 2020-Present

- Assists with social media campaigns for Company A.
- Develops brochures and print materials for Company A to offer to prospective clients.
- Copy edits materials before they are printed.

Incorporation B: Public Relations Intern

Fall 2019-Spring 2020

- Aided colleagues in navigating new social media platforms.
- Provided feedback on company materials for clients.
- Assisted Public Relations department with development of new initiatives.

References:

[If asked, provide the required number of references. Include their full names, titles, and their contact information. Get your references' approval, first.]
