


SAN DIEGO MESA COLLEGE  
Career Services

# COVER LETTER HANDBOOK

A GUIDE TO WRITING  
A PROFESSIONAL  
COVER LETTER

2025 / 2026





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# PREPARING YOUR COVER LETTER: CHECKLIST



**Did you follow a standard business format?**

The cover letter should be neat, concise, well-organized and almost always fit on one page. Avoid unusual typefaces intricate or font styles. Print your cover letter on white or an off-white colored paper that matches your resume paper.



**Have you proofread your cover letter and asked others to as well?**

Make sure there is no incorrect spelling, improper grammar, poor organization, and/or inappropriate language. Your letter is a direct reflection of the quality of work that you produce.



**Have you highlighted your strengths and what you have to offer?**

Brag a little! Give a few facts, list relevant skills, and state accomplishments on recent jobs that will be impressive.



**Did you describe what sets you apart from other applicants?**

Emphasize your skills, talents, and experiences to show how you would be a valuable addition to the team! If you have relevant volunteer or professional experience, mention it briefly in your cover letter.



**Were you direct and to the point?**

State your intentions and qualifications right up front. Don't expect a senior personnel manager or recruiter to know why you are sending your resume. Remember cover letters are typically read for approximately eight seconds.



**Have you personalized your letter to the company?**

Show that you have done your homework by mentioning company specifics such as a department, a new project, or a recent acquisition. A cover letter that relates your skills and experience to a specific position in a specific organization is more effective .



**Are you sure you have not included any negative information?**

Never include personality conflicts with previous employers, or sarcastic remarks in your cover letter. If you are bad-mouthing your present place of employment, interviewers may fear a repeat performance if they hire you.



# COVER LETTER

## CONTENT

This is a generally accepted outline for a cover letter; but not the **only** format for a cover letter.

Feel free to use some variance according to your personal style.

When creating and formatting your cover letter, remember, it has a life expectancy of only about eight seconds—so make every second count!

### Your Name

Address, City, State Zip  
Phone Number | Email Address  
Website

Address the cover letter to a specific individual whenever possible.

Make your name stand out by increasing the font size and/or using capitalization. Include website if professional.

Date of Letter

Contact Name  
Contact Title  
Company Name  
Street Address/City, State Zip

Other salutations to use when you do not have the name of a contact are:

- **To Whom It May Concern:**
- **Dear Hiring Manager:**
- **Dear Selection Committee:**

Dear (contact name):

### PARAGRAPH #1: THE PURPOSE

The first paragraph tells why you're contacting the person. Include: **1)** the name of the job for which you are applying; **2)** how you learned about the position; **3)** the name of the person (if any) who referred you to the organization and opening, preferably a colleague of the contact person; **4)** a brief sentence about who you are; and **5)** a statement to indicate your knowledge of their company. Your goal is to demonstrate that you are an excellent candidate and to entice them to read further.

### PARAGRAPH #2 and Optional #3: ABOUT YOU

The second and optional third paragraphs make up the critical content section. You should tell more about yourself, especially **why you're what they're looking for, by emphasizing skills or abilities you have that relate to the job for which you are applying**. Be sure to communicate confidence! If you have had relevant work experience or related education, be sure to point it out with **specific examples**, but do not reiterate your entire resume. You may also clarify anything unclear on your resume in this section.

### LAST PARAGRAPH: APPRECIATION & FURTHER CONTACT

The last paragraph is your goodbye. You may refer the reader to your enclosed resume and whatever media you are using to illustrate your training, interests, and experience. You thank the reader for his or her time; then you push for an interview. **Assert yourself** by telling the contact person you will call him/her on a designated date or within a specified time period to set up a meeting. Alternatively, **state that you are available for an in-person interview at his/her convenience**.

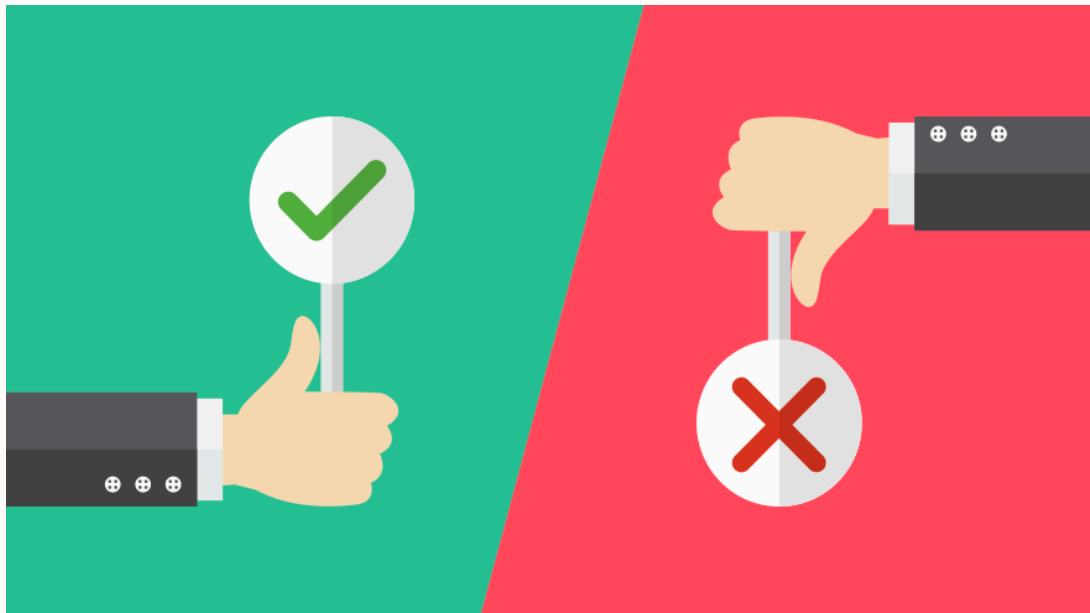
Sincerely,

Your Signature  
Your name typed

The last paragraph is the shortest paragraph. It can be as simple as: "Thank you for your consideration. I look forward to hearing from you."

# COVER LETTER

## DO'S & DON'TS



### DO'S

01

Write a custom Cover Letter for every job you choose to apply to

02

Be specific and direct in explaining why you should be selected for the role

03

Be yourself while remaining polite using professional language

04

Make sure to have your contact information easily accessible

05

Use the same header as your resume and make it a uniform document

### DON'TS

01

Don't address the employer by their First Name

02

Don't come across overly confident and assume you got the job

03

Don't use bullet points to communicate your experience

04

Don't just repeat the exact same content from your resume

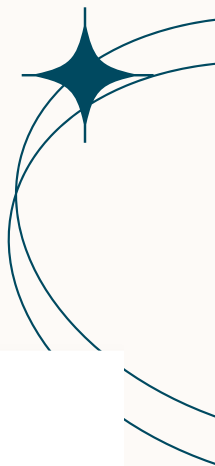
05

Don't let it exceed one page



# COVER LETTER

## EXAMPLES



**First Name Last Name**

City, State Zip | example@example.com | (555) 555-5555

06 December 2024

Susan Boyd  
Hiring Manager  
Sustainability Task Force of DC  
1794 Columbia Rd.,  
NW Washington, DC 20009

Dear Ms. Boyd:

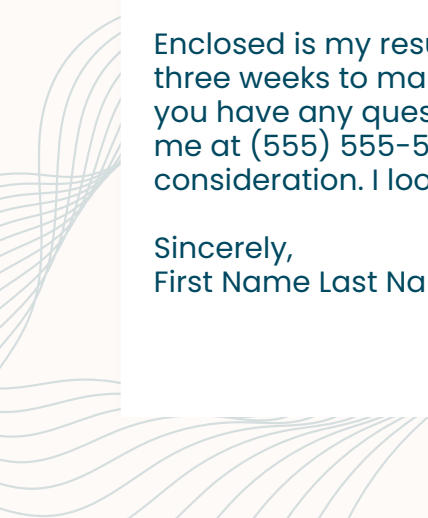
I am writing to express my interest in the Sustainability Task Force Summer Internship Program, which I read about on the Graves Center for Calling & Career website. I am a junior at Georgetown College and I am very interested in educating the community about environmental protection.

I would be a strong asset to the Sustainability Taskforce due to my academic training and writing experience in relation to environmental issues. I have two years of experience writing for my school paper and several community newspapers. Through these experiences, I have developed my written communication skills and messaging techniques. I also developed strong relationships with my peers as well as local community members. Through my undergraduate studies, I have enhanced my knowledge of environmental issues including economics, ecology, and policy. In addition, I expanded my research skills and abilities through my experience working as a student library assistant throughout my sophomore year. Finally, through my previous experience as an administrative assistant for Harmonium Inc., I developed strong computer, organizational and interpersonal skills.

I am very interested in interning with the Sustainability Task Force because of your reputation for community participation and involvement. I value inclusion and access for all when it pertains to community development and improvement in order to provide more supportive and proactive solutions. I know this is something your organization prioritizes as evidenced by the press releases I reviewed on through your website. I would really enjoy the opportunity to be able to both utilize and further develop my writing skills within your team.

Enclosed is my resume for your review and consideration. I will contact you within two to three weeks to make sure you have received all of my information. In the meantime, if you have any questions or would like to further discuss my qualifications, you can call me at (555) 555-5555 or scharles@gmail.com. Thank you for your time and consideration. I look forward to talking with you in the near future.

Sincerely,  
First Name Last Name



# COVER LETTER

## EXAMPLES

**First Name Last Name**

City, State Zip

(555) 555-555 | example@example.com

05 August 2024

Acme Technologies  
Child Care Department  
Phoenicia, New York 12464-5010

To Whom It May Concern:

Upon learning about the Childcare Provider posting with Acme Technologies, I was eager to contact you with my interest. When reviewing the job description, I was excited to see how well my experience aligns with your company's needs and position requirements. From reading your company's website, I feel your core mission and culture suit what I offer as a professional.

As an adept Childcare Provider, I have a well-rounded skill set in early childhood development and honed talents in lesson plan development and age-appropriate activity development, making me an ideal fit for the Childcare Provider position. Furthermore, I am a recognized expert in organization and a communicative collaborator. My previous roles have strengthened my capabilities in planning and time management, including keen attention to detail and accuracy.

I am excited at the prospect of bringing my talents to Acme Technologies. I look forward to hearing from you, at your earliest convenience, to discuss how my experiences and qualifications will prove valuable in the Childcare Provider role. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,  
First Name Last Name

**SCAN HERE**

For More  
Cover Letter  
Examples






<https://bit.ly/CLexamples>

# SAN DIEGO MESA COLLEGE

## Career Services

# Contact Us!

 Career Center (Student Services bldg., 3rd floor)  
 619-388-2777  
 [mesacareer@sdccd.edu](mailto:mesacareer@sdccd.edu)

## How to Schedule an Appointment



Need Resume/Cover  
Letter Assistance For  
Jobs/Internships



Call or Email To  
Schedule An  
Appointment



Collaborate With  
A Career Peer  
Via Zoom, Email,  
Or Phone



Take off with your  
CUSTOM resume  
and  
cover letter!

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