



Oregon State University  
Cascades

# COVER LETTERS

The cover letter or letter of application is a one page document that **supports your resume**. It emphasizes your interest in the company and highlights your specific skills or experience that make you a unique and qualified candidate. Your letter expresses more of who you are, rather than your resume which shares what you have done.



## WHERE DO I BEGIN?

Start by doing your research on the company/organization and reviewing the job posting. Be sure that you understand each of the following items before you begin writing your letter:

- who the company/organization is (what they do, their mission, their culture, the population they serve/target, etc.)
- why the company/organization excites or intrigues you
- how your skills and experience align with the required or preferred qualifications listed on the job posting
- what additional skills and experience you have that makes you unique or will add to your contributions to the company

It is important that each cover letter be tailored to the exact job that you are applying for. Employers can easily identify a generic letter and will not award it much time or consideration.

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# FORMAT

- Format your cover letter similarly to your resume: copy and paste the header with your contact information and use the same margins, font style and font size
- A cover letter **MUST** be no longer than one page, no exceptions
- Summarize certain experiences and skills that align with the job posting, **DO NOT** copy what is already on your resume
- Be concise and avoid run-on sentences
- Watch your "I"s, do not start every sentence with "I"
- Proofread to make sure that your cover letters are error free – you cannot always trust spellcheck!



## WHO SHOULD I ADDRESS MY LETTER TO?

If the job posting does not list a contact person for the position, **DO NOT** simply address your letter to "To Whom it May Concern:". You have a couple of additional options:

# 1

As long as the posting does not say "no calls please" you have the ability to call HR or the front desk to introduce yourself, let them know what position you are applying for and ask if they would be able to tell you who you should address your letter to.

If you are able to get a name, the hiring manager will know that you did something extra to find out who they are.

# 2

If the posting asks you not to call or if the office will not give you a contact name, you can choose to address your letter to:

"Dear Hiring Manager:",  
"Dear Recruiter:", or  
"Dear Internship Coordinator:".

Whichever you feel makes the most sense for the position that you are applying for



## THE STARTING LINE

The vast majority of cover letters begin with:

"I am writing to apply for..." or "Please except my application for ..."

To make your cover letter stand out, you want to begin with a more interesting first sentence that will grab the reader's attention. For example:

"As a current student majoring in ... at OSU-Cascades with a passion for..., I am interested in applying for..."

"As a recent graduate from OSU-Cascades with a degree in ... and experience in..., I am excited to apply for..."

You could also begin with a quote that resonates with you and relates to the company or position, or a unique fact about you that would make you stand out from the crowd. Nearly anything besides the generic opening line that is relevant to the company and/or position will do.

## Benny Cascades

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Date of Writing  
Recruiter's Full Name  
Recruiter's Job Title  
Company Name  
Company Address  
City, State & Zip

Dear (Recruiter's First and Last Name):

**First Paragraph:** Start with an interesting first sentence to help you stand out from other applicants (see suggestions on the previous page). Continue to explain what position you are applying for and how you heard about the position. It is important to state specifically why you are interested in working for the company. Show that you have done your research by including two to three sentences on what you like about the company and how what they do/who they are aligns with your goals and values.

**Second/Third Paragraph:** The body of your letter is probably the most difficult part to get together. This is where you want to make clear connections between the experiences and skills that you have, and the desired qualifications for the position. You DO NOT want to restate your résumé here, but give details of experiences that support your qualifications for the position. Tell them how and why you will be a productive member of their organization. Sometimes two paragraphs are used so you can list work and internship related experiences in one paragraph, and related academic and co-curricular experiences in a second paragraph.

**Closing Paragraph:** In the final paragraph you should refer the employer to your enclosed résumé that further outlines your qualifications for the position, state your desire to meet with them in person to further discuss the position and your candidacy. Also indicate that you can be contacted for questions or to set up an interview and include both your email address and phone number. Last but not least, thank them for their time and consideration of your application and state that you look forward to hearing from them.

Sincerely,

\* YOUR SIGNATURE \*

Your Name (Typed)



**Tip:** you can create a digital signature by using a draw or paint application on a phone or tablet and then insert it into your letter as an image, or you can type your name here and change the format to use a script style font in a larger font size than the body text.

# COVER LETTER REVIEWS

Once you have completed a rough draft of your cover letter, you can schedule an individual appointment with us in Handshake to discuss and review your documents in relation to the specific position(s) that you want to apply for.

Access Handshake at <https://oregonstate.joinhandshake.com/> and login using your ONID username and password.

It will be helpful to have a copy of your rough draft as well as access to the job posting and your resume in order to provide you with the most meaningful feedback.



This publication will be made available in an accessible alternative format upon request. Please contact OSU-Cascades Disability Access Services at 541-737-4098 or [CascadesDAS@oregonstate.edu](mailto:CascadesDAS@oregonstate.edu).



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