



**OCEAN  
DISCOVERY  
INSTITUTE**  
*young lives transformed through science*

# COVER LETTER WORKSHOP

Career Access Mentor Program

# TODAY'S GOAL

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To set participants up to create a template cover letter that effectively communicates participant's fit with the company and position, and can be customized to specific job opportunities.

# AGENDA

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- Resume Peer Review
- Cover Letter 101
- Cover Letter Template
- Evaluations
- Next Steps

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# RESUME RECAP

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# RESUME BASICS

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- Resumes are ALWAYS **customized** to the opportunity you are applying for.
- Each time you prepare a new resume, start with the **position description** and ask yourself, “what kind of person (character and skills) is this opportunity seeking?”
- Your experience bullet points should begin with a **strong action word** that describes a skill you have.
  - Take action words from the position description.
- Focus on the **impact** you made in your experience sections.
  - Use quantitative evidence whenever possible.
- Most **relevant/important** sections at the top.
- **Formatting** is key; resume should demonstrate consistency and be easy to read.
  - Headings, bolding, italics, underlining, periods
- Experiences should be listed in **reverse chronological** order (traditional resumes)
- Include any **trainings** your received or any **special programs** you use, especially if you received a certificate of completion.
- Keep it **concise**, usually one page (unless otherwise advised).

# ACTIVITY: PEER REVIEW

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In pairs, provide feedback on your peer's resume:

- Choose who will review (**Partner 1**) and who will be reviewed (**Partner 2**) in the first round.
- **Partner 1&2:** Clarify any questions about the resume
- **Partner 2:** ONLY listens
- **Partner 1:** Gives feedback:
  - Focus feedback on what the resume does well
  - Share any parts of the resume that peaked your interest or you would like to understand more/better
  - Recommend “quick hits” (recall the “basics”)
- **Partner 1:** Guesses what kind of opportunity your partner is applying to
- **Partner 2:** At one-minute countdown, conclude by responding to feedback, without being defensive. This is an opportunity for Partner 2 to reflect out loud on ideas that came to mind while hearing partner's feedback. **Partner 1** is silent.

# QUESTIONS?

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# COVER LETTER 101

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# K-W-L

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## KNOW...

- Customized for each job position, how I personally fit this position
- An opportunity to expand your resume or something that doesn't fit, what you want to achieve
- Tailored to who you are applying to
- What you can bring to the team, what employer can expect
- Cover Letters provide insight about your motivation in pursuing the position. It includes your experience but also your goals.

## WANT TO KNOW...

- Flow, how to format better
- Lot easier to have a resume to cherry pick from—is there something similar for cover letters?
- Are there certain key words, or what are employers looking for?
- How much information should I provide?
- how do they really matter? what do they provide that a resume and an interview cannot?

# WHAT IS A COVER LETTER?

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A cover letter:

- introduces you and your resume to an employer
- explains why you are writing or applying for the job
- details why you are a good match for the organization and the position
- demonstrates your abilities and helps to establish your credibility
- draws your readers' attention to specific qualifications
- provides a sample of your written communications skills
- explains when you plan to contact your prospective employer.

(Purdue OWL)

# THE BASICS

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- LEARN ABOUT THE JOB!
  - "What values and skills would a good match have for the prospective organization/job?"
  - "What kind of personality do I have?"
  - "What are the qualifications and duties of the position, and what relevant experience do I have?"
- Identifying key words you found in your job research.
  - Words that signal what an employer considers important or essential in hiring for a position.
  - Words that give you insight into the skills, accomplishments, personality traits, and levels of education and experience your employer desires.
- Ask yourself what skills you have used at school or work; try to answer the question, *how can I help the organization?*
  - Be specific when you describe these abilities - just using the terms will not help you. Be specific and provide proof/ discuss particular examples where these abilities led to measurable positive results.

# QUESTIONS?

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# PRACTICE: IDENTIFY KEY WORDS

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A company posts the following job description. Can you identify the key words?

*"Looking for a highly motivated, customer oriented individual to work full-time at the customer service desk."*

# PRACTICE: VALUES

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## ORGANIZATION

**Mission:** Ocean Discovery Institute uses ocean science to empower young people from underserved urban communities of color to transform their lives, their community, and our world as science and conservation leaders.

### **Values:**

- Learning
- Diversity
- Stewardship
- Leadership
- Passion

### **Position:**

We Prioritize Applicants Who:

- Demonstrate a deep understanding of the community we serve, such as living in City Heights or a similar community.
- Are fluent in a second language.

## ME

*values and goals you share with the company that align*

- Passionate about serving the community
- Increasing diversity
- Care for the community
- Increasing diversity in spaces where minorities aren't being seen
- Prioritizes the principles of DEi in past work experiences

# PRACTICE: SKILLS

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## ORGANIZATION

**Program Goal:** The program develops leaders who are dedicated to making a difference, and supports them on their journey towards finding rewarding careers.

### **Who should apply:**

- 18-24 years of age and have a high school diploma.
- Able to commit to approx. 20 hours a week for one service year (Sept.-Jul.).
- Ready for the benefits and challenges of AmeriCorps service.

### **Duties:**

- Mentor and build relationships to increase engagement and support students on their path to future success.
- Assist in delivery of hands-on STEM lessons and supports.
- Program set up/breakdown, activity creation, and student management.
- Work with staff and volunteers to facilitate activities and events as well as strengthen relationships.

## ME

*examples that support claim that I have these qualifications*

- Worked in teams to execute large scale events for my community
- Working with elementary students
- Developed weekly learning plans
- Worked with various grade levels of students in a school-like environment
- Ability to teach science education to audiences with various educational backgrounds as an aquarium volunteer

# COVER LETTER TIPS

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- Tailor your cover letter to:
  - show specific needs of employers and how you meet them
  - persuade that your goals align with the organization's goals (mission) and that your skills align with the position requirements
- An effective cover letter:
  - highlights the qualifications related to the position as laid out in the job criteria
  - proves that you align well with the organization and that you meet the job requirements
  - persuades employer you are best fit for the position and company
  - does not repeat the resume, but elaborates 1-2 skills/qualities that are most pertinent to the job role and which you have experience and/or passion.
  - provides contact information and a plan for future contact
- Some transferable skills, skills that can be used from job to job, include:
  - Leadership qualities
  - Ability to complete multiple tasks at the same time ("multi-tasking")
  - Teamwork skills
  - Ability to meet deadlines
  - Interpersonal skills
  - Initiative to complete projects without supervision ("ability to work independently")
  - Written communications skills
  - Verbal communications skills
  - Computer skills



# RESOURCES

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- Career Access Portal
  - Career guides
  - Writing lab
  - Article: “How to Address Your Cover Letter”
- Peer reviews
- Professional reviews

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# COVER LETTER TEMPLATE

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# FORMATTING

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- Keep it to one page.
- Write one introductory paragraph, one to three paragraphs to highlight your skills, and one concluding paragraph.
- Single-space your cover letter.
- Use standard margins (one-inch margins, usually).
- Can use smaller margins (to about 0.7-inch) as long as you are consistent on all sides.
- Align all paragraphs to the left of the page. (You can also indent the first line of each paragraph, but that is not used as often.)



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## A COVER LETTER HAS FOUR ESSENTIAL PARTS:

- 🔹 Heading
- 🔹 Introduction
- 🔹 Argument
- 🔹 Closing

# HEADING

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In your heading, include your contact information:

- name
- address
- phone number
- email address

The date and company contact information should directly follow your contact information.

- Leave a space between addresses and dates.

Leave a space between your heading (contact info) and greeting ("Dear...:").

Whenever possible, you should address your letter to a specific individual, the person in charge of interviewing and hiring (the hiring authority).

- Larger companies often have standard procedures for dealing with solicited and unsolicited resumes and cover letters.
- Sending your employment documents to a specific person increases the chances that they will be seriously reviewed by the company.
- If you are uncertain of your contact's gender, avoid using Mr. or Mrs. by simply using the person's full name.
- When a job advertisement does not provide you with the name of the hiring authority, call the company to ask for more information.
- If you cannot find out the name of the hiring authority, you may address your letter to "hiring professionals" - e.g., "Dear Hiring Professionals."

# INTRODUCTION

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Important to include:

- who you are and why you are writing
- how you learned about the position
- why you are interested in it
- briefly relate your education and/or experience to the requirements of the position
- contact associated with the company from whom you heard of the job opening

Most important is to briefly overview why your values and goals align with the organization's and how you will help them. You should also touch on how you match the position requirements. By reviewing how you align with the organization and how your skills match what they're looking for, you can forecast the contents of your cover letter before you move into your argument.

# ARGUMENT

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Your argument is an important part of your cover letter, because it allows you to persuade your reader why you are a good fit for the company and the job.

- Leave a space between each paragraph.

In your argument, you should try to:

- Show your reader you possess the most important skills s/he seeks (you're a good match for the organization's mission/goals and job requirements).
- Convince your reader that the company will benefit from hiring you (how you will help them).
- Include in each paragraph a strong reason why your employer should hire you and how they will benefit from the relationship.
- Maintain an upbeat/personable tone.
- Avoid explaining your entire resume but use your resume as a source of data to support your argument (the two documents should work together).

# CLOSING

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Your closing restates your main points and reveals what you plan to do after your readers have received your resume and cover letter.

In your closing, you should try to:

- Restate why you align with the organization's mission/goals.
- Restate why your skills match the position requirements and how your experience will help the organization.
- Inform your readers when you will contact them.
- Include your phone number and e-mail address.
- Thank your readers for their consideration.

Leave at least three spaces between your complimentary close ("Sincerely,") and typed name.

- Sign your name in ink between your complimentary close and typed name.



# A SAMPLE CLOSING

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*I believe my coursework and work experience in electrical engineering will help your Baltimore division attain its goals, and I look forward to meeting with you to discuss the job position further. I will contact you before June 5th to discuss my application. If you wish to contact me, I may be reached at 765-555-6473, or by e-mail at [jwillis3@e-mail-link.com](mailto:jwillis3@e-mail-link.com). Thank you for your time and consideration.*

- Although this closing may seem bold, potential employers may read your documents with more interest if they know you will be calling them in the future. Also, many employment authorities prefer candidates who are willing to take the initiative to follow-up. Additionally, by following up, you are able to inform prospective employers that you're still interested in the position and determine where the company is in the hiring process.
- When you tell readers you will contact them, it is imperative that you do so. It will not reflect well on you if you forget to call a potential employer when you said you would. It's best to demonstrate your punctuality and interest in the company by calling when you say you will. If you do not feel comfortable informing your readers when you will contact them, it is okay to omit.

# QUESTIONS?

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# WRAP UP

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# K-W-L

## LEARNED...

- Word generators to pull out key words
- Have resume and job description available while writing
- Address the cover letter to the person who is hiring
- Create a template for future cover letters
- Cover letters and resumes allow you to create a full picture of your skills and motivations.



# EVALUATION

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Also complete CAMP II March survey.

# NEXT STEPS

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- Sign-up for Challenge-By-Choice
  - Professional resume & cover letter reviews
- Next Workshop: Imposter Syndrome & Code Switching
  - Determine best day in May



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*young lives transformed through science*

**THANK YOU.**

[oceandiscoveryinstitute.org](http://oceandiscoveryinstitute.org)