



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

## **COVER LETTER PD**

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
- 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 1:** Gives feedback (2 minutes)
  - 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 2:** ONLY listens
- **Partner 1:** Guesses what kind of opportunity your partner is applying to
- **Partner 2:** Conclude by responding to feedback for 1 MINUTE, 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:** ONLY listens

# QUESTIONS?

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# COVER LETTER 101

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# K-W-L

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KNOW...

WANT TO KNOW...

# 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

## 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.

(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 are the qualifications and duties of the position, and what relevant experience do I have?"
- Identify **key words** 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.
- **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

# 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:** To inspire the next generation of science leaders, Ocean Discovery Institute creates learning experiences for young people traditionally excluded from science due to race, income status, and educational opportunity. Our students will join high-paying fields, break generational poverty, and change the future of science.

### **Values:**

- We Love Learning
- We Choose Leadership
- We Believe in Community
- We Stand for Justice
- We Imagine Possibilities

### **Position:**

- Assist with delivery of hands-on STEM and conservation lessons, to students of all ages in the field and at the Living Lab.
- Assist in program coordination such as supply management, curriculum development, student management, and instructor support.
- Work with students and community in numerous roles (in-person mentorship, program instruction assistance, homework support, field trips) that increase engagement and support students on their path to academic success and beyond.

## ME

*Practice customizing a cover letter.*

*Draft a couple of sentences that demonstrate how you align with the company's values and goals.*

# 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 20-40 hours a week for one service year (Sept.-Jul.).
- Ready for the benefits and challenges of AmeriCorps service.

### **Qualifications:**

- Passion for, commitment to, and understanding of Ocean Discovery and AmeriCorps missions and service.
- Demonstrate a deep understanding of the community we serve, such as graduating from our programs, living in the community of City Heights, or living in or from a community similar to City Heights.
- Dedicated to the concept of promoting equal opportunity for young people from underserved urban communities of color.

## ME

*Practice customizing a cover letter.*

*Draft a couple of sentences that include examples of your experience that support your claim that you have these qualifications.*

# TRANSFERABLE SKILLS

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- 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, and contact associated with the company from whom you heard of the job opening (if applicable)
- why you are interested in it
- briefly relate your education and/or experience to the requirements of the position

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.
- Include how you can be contacted.
- 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.



# QUESTIONS?

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# WRAP UP

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# K-W-L

## LEARNED...



# NEXT STEPS

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- Challenge-of-the-Month: Resume & Cover Letter Review
  - Due April 30
- ESA Job Shadow
  - April 17, 2024 at 9am-2:30pm
- Next PD: Managing the Job Search
  - May 1, 2024 @ 10am-12pm (in EZ Reports)
  - Guest speaker: Alex Lo from USD's Career Development Center
  - Final CAMP II PD!
- CAMP-II Finale Luncheon
  - May 22 – share CAMP-II accomplishments and intended post-fellowship plans



**OCEAN  
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*young lives transformed through science*

**THANK YOU.**

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