

COVER LETTERS & LETTERS OF INTEREST

Framing before you begin to write:

This is a different style of writing than you may be used to! It is persuasive, personal, semi-formulaic, and concise. A cover letter builds the bridge between you and a potential opportunity – it is how you show authentic fit and interest in a position, company and industry.

What it is: your interest and experiences as they relate to the position and skills that you can contribute.

What it is not: restating resume bullet points, introducing brand new material not on your resume.

To make it great, you'll need to first reflect on your own skill sets and accomplishments. If this is challenging, consult with a career counselor and consider doing a transferable skills inventory. After taking a good look at yourself, take a good look at the position – highlight those parts that interest you and the skills you have.

The focus of the letter should be on WHY you are interested HOW you have fit and WHAT you have to give/provide them (and less about what you have to gain).

Tips for Success:

- Use a brand-new word document each time you write – just like a new paper; you are writing authentically to a new audience in each letter.
- Always convert to a pdf and email as an attachment unless otherwise directed by the employer, saved as _your last name_letter of interest_date
- One page is still optimal for many employers, however with significant experience and in certain industries a two-page letter may be appropriate.
- Never be negative! Focus on what you have, not what you don't. Anywhere you see a 'but' change it to an 'and'.
- Vary your sentence structure so not every sentence begins with "I" to create a more interesting read.

Date

Employer's Name and Address

Dear ____: (If you don't know who it is, consider: a gender-neutral salutation, or Dear Hiring Manager:)

Opening Paragraph: The opening paragraph should state why you are writing and why you are interested in working for the organization. If you are writing a letter of application, state the name of the position for which you are applying and how you became aware of the opening. Comment on your primary career/job goal along with a summary statement of relevant skills/qualities and experiences you will expand upon.

Example: *Recently I spoke with Jill Jones regarding my career interests in education and community service. She informed me of your search for a Program Director for A Better Chance and suggested I contact you. I am very enthusiastic about the description of the Program Director and have enclosed my resume for your consideration.*

When writing a letter of inquiry, state how you became aware of the organization and request an opportunity to meet and discuss ways in which you can contribute to the organization's efforts.

Example: *The June 15, 2017 issue of the Philadelphia Inquirer included an article about A Better Chance's innovative residential teen tutoring program. I would welcome the opportunity to meet with you and learn more about your program and discuss opportunities that may be available.*

If you were referred to the employer by someone, the first sentence is the best place for you to mention this.

Middle Section: Use this section to highlight specific skills and/or experiences (e.g., work experience, leadership, professional development, educational background) relevant to the potential employer's needs. Present your motives for seeking employment with the organization and cite achievements and qualifications related to the position. Two or three short paragraphs are more effective than one longer paragraph.

Example: *My interest in the Program Director position stems from its mission to create and maintain programs benefiting underprivileged teenagers with a desire to complete high school and pursue a college degree. For the past year, I have volunteered with the YWCA organizing an after-school tutoring program for 90 young women between the ages of 13 and 17. This experience strengthened my leadership, organizational, and interpersonal skills. It also solidified my interest in pursuing opportunities like the one offered by A Better Chance.*

If you have qualifications that are not represented on your resume, this is your opportunity to present them. Take advantage of the space of a full-page letter to present your related experience.

Final Paragraph: In this section state what you will do next or what you would like the recipient of the letter to do next. An assertive statement explaining what you are planning to do or what you hope the employer will do is better than a vague request for consideration.

Example: *I would welcome an opportunity to discuss the Program Director position and my interest in contributing to A Better Chance's efforts. I will call you the week of October 11 to discuss the possibility of scheduling a convenient time for us to meet. If you would like to call me before this, I can be reached at 123-456-7890 or via email mshodes@gmail.com.*

Also mention any enclosures that accompany your letter (i.e. resume, writing sample, letters of recommendation, a list of references, etc.).

Sincerely,

Your name

Your Address/contact info