

COVER LETTER WRITING GUIDE

A cover letter is a key – but often confusing – part of the job application process. It expands on your résumé, personalizes your message, and showcases your written communication skills to move you forward.

SELL YOURSELF

Get the reader interested in you and your experiences. Show how you are the perfect fit for the position.

MEET THE EMPLOYER'S NEEDS

Many employers use keyword searches to find candidates who best match the job description – use industry language and speak directly to the role. Show how you've applied required skills before and how you'll add value.

PROPERLY ADDRESS YOUR COVER LETTER

Find the name and job title of the hiring manager, ensuring correct spelling and proper title. If unknown, call the employer or use a formal greeting like "Dear Hiring Official" or "Dear Search Committee."

GET TO THE POINT

Keep your cover letter brief – one page only – as employers have limited time. Start by stating the position you're applying for and where you found it, using clear and concise language.

DO NOT OVERUSE THE WORD "I"

After drafting your cover letter, highlight each sentence starting with "I" to check for overuse. Vary sentence structures to reduce "I" statements and ensure the letter flows smoothly and professionally.

CONVEY THE RIGHT IMAGE

Avoid negativity or criticism of past employers and maintain a confident tone. Replace phrases like "I feel" or "I think" with strong verbs like "I know" to create a positive impression.

BE ASSERTIVE

Clearly state your goal, such as requesting an application or interview in your closing. Express gratitude and interest, and provide your contact information. Always thank the reader for their time.

MAKE IT PERFECT

Spell correctly and watch your grammar. Have multiple people proofread your cover letter. Save a copy of your document as a PDF to ensure un-altered formatting before submitting it to an employer.

MATCH YOUR RÉSUMÉ

Make sure to use the same font style, size, and color as your résumé.

CUSTOMIZE

Every cover letter should be tailored to each company, industry, and position. Showcase your experience as it relates to the specified position.

WEB BASED COVER LETTER RESOURCE **HIRATION**

Hiration is an AI-powered platform designed to support job seekers with their career development. It offers tools for résumé and **cover letter** building, LinkedIn profile optimization, and interview practice leveraging AI to provide feedback. Visit <https://indstate.hiration.com/>, login with your ISU email, and get started!

Be sure to have your résumé and cover letter reviewed by Career Center staff Monday-Friday at:
Sycamore One Stop in Normal Hall: 8 AM – 12 PM • Walk-In Hours at Career Center: 12 PM – 3 PM

Remember to connect the company's needs with your experience. Highlight the keywords used in the job description, then include as many keywords as appropriate in your examples. Provide details and support when possible to show your skills, as well as highlight how you will be an asset to the company. The example below shows this connection.

Job Description	Examples in Cover Letter (body paragraph)
• Provide compassionate and patient-centered care to individuals across the lifespan in clinical, acute, and long-term settings • Administer medications and monitor vital signs, documenting in compliance with hospital and state regulations • Collaborate with interdisciplinary healthcare teams to implement care plans and support patient education • Maintain compliance with HIPAA and safety protocols, and uphold a standard of professionalism in all interactions • Prior experience in critical care, emergency, or pediatric settings preferred • Proficient in electronic medical records (EMR) systems and clinical documentation software	My clinical rotations during nursing school have prepared me to deliver compassionate, evidence-based care in both acute and outpatient settings. While interning at Mercy Health, I was entrusted with monitoring vital signs, administering medications, and documenting patient progress using EMR systems like Epic. I collaborated with RNs and physicians to develop and implement care plans, ensuring patient understanding through patient education sessions. I'm confident that my experience and dedication to professionalism will allow me to contribute meaningfully to your healthcare team.
Job Description	Examples in Cover Letter (body paragraph)
• Enrolled in a Bachelor's program in mechanical, civil, or electrical engineering or related field • Assist with design, modeling, and testing of engineering components or systems • Support data analysis, reporting, and documentation for ongoing projects • Proficient in CAD software (e.g., AutoCAD, SolidWorks) and basic programming tools (e.g., MATLAB, Python) • Ability to collaborate with engineers and technicians to solve technical problems • Strong attention to detail, communication, and time management skills	As a junior majoring in mechanical engineering, I am eager to apply my academic training in real-world design projects. While working on a team capstone project, I assisted in the modeling and testing of a solar-powered water pump system using CAD software such as SolidWorks. I conducted data analysis to evaluate efficiency under different conditions and helped present our findings to faculty. This experience improved my ability to collaborate across disciplines and reinforced the importance of detail and communication in engineering processes.

COVER LETTER EXAMPLE

Your Street Address
City, State Zip Code
Telephone Number
Indiana State University Email Address

Month Day, Year

Mr./Ms./Dr./First Name Last Name
Title
Name of Organization
Street or P.O Box Address
City, State Zip Code

Dear Mr./Ms./Dr. Last Name:

Opening paragraph: This is your introduction. State why you are writing the letter, the specific position or type of work you are applying for, and how you learned of the organization or position (Career Center, name of publication or website, friend, employment service, etc.). Additionally, you may choose to include basic information about yourself, such as your education background. This is where you also would mention why you are interested in this employer and this specific position, brag about them and why you want to work there!

Body Paragraph(s): (One to two paragraphs) In this section, demonstrate that you know enough about the employer or position to relate your background to the employer or position. **Do your research!** Mention specific qualifications that make you a good fit for the employer's needs. Use some of the key words they use in the job description. This is also an opportunity to explain in more detail relevant items in your résumé. If possible, describe how you have used important skills in at least one specific accomplishment or project. Do not restate full sections of your résumé, but rather give concrete examples of how you possess specific qualities and skills. Examples will indicate to the employer the type of work you will perform for them in the future.

Conclusion Paragraph: In the closing paragraph, indicate that you would like the opportunity to interview for the position. Repeat your contact information and state that you would be glad to provide the employer with any additional information needed. Thank the employer for his/her consideration.

Sincerely,

Electronic signature (*Brush Script Font*)

Your name typed

SAMPLE COVER LETTER (BASIC)

324 Hulman Lane
Terre Haute, IN 47809
812-123-4567
_____@sycamores.indstate.edu

June 1, 2026

Maggie Zonder
Assistant Director of Student Programming and Leadership
Indiana State University Honors College
Pickerl Hall 110B
Terre Haute, IN 47089

Dear Ms. Zonder:

As a sophomore at Indiana State University working toward my bachelor's degree in Speech-Language Pathology, I would like to express my interest in becoming an Honors Peer Mentor. This is my fourth semester as a member of the Honors College as well as a President's Scholar. The Honors College has provided me a plethora of opportunities to develop educationally as well as become more involved in the community. I am very grateful for all of the opportunities that have enriched my college experience and would love to be a mentor to freshman honors students. I have past leadership experiences that have allowed me to become more involved on ISU's campus as well as develop skills that make me a qualified candidate.

As a Peer Advisor at the Career Center, I have been able to develop leadership and communication skills through resume and cover letter reviews. By facilitating these one-on-one appointments with fellow ISU students, I provide feedback and offer advice in order to enhance my peers' resumes and cover letters. Conducting these walk-in appointments provides me the opportunity to help my peers develop professionally and take the next steps toward their future career goals. In addition, these appointments have allowed me to strengthen my leadership skills as well as my written and verbal communication skills, which I can translate into the role of an Honors College Peer Mentor. These communication skills will help me to engage with my mentees, answer questions they have regarding the college transition process, and relay important information about the Honors College. Due to my experience as a peer advisor, I believe I have gained the necessary skills and qualities that would make me a successful Honors Peer Mentor, and I know I will be a great fit for your team.

I would appreciate an opportunity to meet with you to discuss my qualifications in greater detail. Please feel free to contact me at 812-123-4567 or _____@sycamores.indstate.edu. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

First Name Last Name

First Name Last Name