COVER LETTER WRITING

Graduate Student Version

WHAT IS A COVER LETTER

A cover letter is a one-page document that you submit alongside your resume when applying for a job. While your resume provides a factual history of your experience, the cover letter is your personal narrative—it connects the dots between your background and the specific needs of the employer. Below are some quick points of a cover letter.

- Expresses interest & qualifications for a particular position
- Personal but professional
- Tailored to position/company
- Explains how you fit with organization & how you will help them
- Expands main points from your resume
- "Sells" qualifications to the prospective employer

Tips to Get Started

- **Side-by-side comparison:**

KEYWORDS FROM JD	YOUR MATCHING SKILLS
"Work in ambiguous environments"	Led a project where the scope changed 3 times and successfully delivered on time.
"Thought leadership in analytics"	Mentored 3 junior analysts and presented weekly insights to the VP.
"Machine Learning solutions"	Built a churn prediction model that saved $20k in monthly revenue.

- **Use your research skills:**
  - The Position/Role
    - General job responsibilities
    - Desired qualifications and skills
    - Identify key words from job description
  - The Company/Culture
    - Mission Statement
    - Organizational Vision & Goals
    - Strengths & Opportunities

- **Identify 2-3 main themes:** Look back to your experiences and use different examples using the STAR method.

What NOT to Do

- Generic – same letter for all the jobs you applied
- Writing like your research paper or personal statement
- Write what you want to tell them but NOT what you THINK they want to know
- Listing points from your resume or recite resume
- Tentative language
- Not making connections of your skills/experience for them

***Generic cover letters tend to get ignored by recruiters. Additionally, some ATSs do scan cover letters now.

SECTIONS + WRITING TIPS

HEADER

Your contact info: name, email, phone, and LinkedIn or Github link (if available)

Your Name
City, State | Phone | Email | LinkedIn (optional)

SALUTATIONS

A professional greeting (ideally using the hiring manager's name). Do not use "Dear Sir/Madam" or "Whom it May Concern"

Date
Name of Contact Person
Title Organization
Mailing Address
City, State, Zip Code

Dear Ms., Mr., Dr., (etc) OR Hiring Committee/Manager/Team

1st PARAGRAPH/OPENING

A "hook" that identifies the role you're applying for and expresses enthusiasm. Try not to start by introduce you by your degree and major.

As a Data Scientist who thrives on transforming complex infrastructure data into actionable business strategy, I was thrilled to see the opening for a Lead Data Scientist within the Infrastructure Data Centers (IDC) team. With a background in building analytics programs from the ground up and a passion for driving operational efficiency through Machine Learning, I am eager to help Meta scale its global data center operations.

BODY

- Highlight skills and benefits to the company
- Emphasize interest in the company
- Provide concrete evidence
- Do not include all information from your resume or just list things on your resume
- Show, don't tell: Focus on 2-3 themes from the job summary or position descriptions

In my current/previous role at [Current Company], I led a cross-functional initiative to [mention a major achievement, e.g., "reduce server downtime by 15%" or "optimize energy consumption"] by developing a predictive ML model that automated previously manual monitoring processes. Much like the environment described in this role, I am comfortable operating in high-ambiguity spaces where the "value" of the data hasn't been fully unlocked yet.

FINAL PARAGRAPH/CLOSING

Conclude with next step and provide contact information, and sign off! Best to create an electronic signature. You can either use take a screenshot of your handwritten signature and paste it, or use your digital pen to write one.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I look forward to the possibility of discussing how my experience can support Meta's infrastructure goals. You can reach me at xxx-xxxx-xxxx or xxxxx@ucr.edu.

Sincerely,
[Your Name]

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