COVER LETTER GUIDE

A cover letter allows you to introduce:

1. Who you are.
2. Who is your primary audience and what do they need to know about you?
3. How will they receive the resume (i.e., the medium: paper, electronic, plain text, or modified via an online application system) and what do you need to do to make the most of the format employed.

This is your opportunity to expand on points from your resume that are especially noteworthy or relevant and convey your interest in the position and company. Unless the job/internship description specifically states not to, ***you should always send an original cover letter when submitting a resume or application to an employer.***

Use the company website or Linked-In to find the name of the hiring manager. If you can't find it, address the letter to the specific department or "Hiring Manager". Avoid "To Whom It May Concern".

If uncertain whether "Mrs." or "Miss" is preferred, use "Ms."

Align all text to the left side of the page.

If submitting online or through email, remember to include a digital signature here.

YOUR NAME

Address | Phone Number | E-mail

Date

Full Name
Formal Title
Company Name
Street Address
City, State, Zip Code

Dear Ms./Mr. Name:

OPENING PARAGRAPH: State that you are applying for a specific position and how you learned of the position, using a contact name when possible. Personalize the letter by saying why you want to work for this organization. Introduce your credentials, professional experiences skills, or relevant personality traits.

MIDDLE PARAGRAPH(S): Succinctly outline your qualifications (e.g., academic background/training, work experience, skills) that make you a strong candidate. Relate your qualifications to the needs of the current job opening and show how you would be a good fit with the company. Specific examples can help in demonstrating your skills and experiences.

CLOSING PARAGRAPH: Refer the reader to the enclosed resume or any additional application materials. Indicate that your resume summarizes your qualifications and background. Express your desire for an interview or the opportunity to meet them in person and let them know they can contact you by phone and/or email if they need additional information. Thank them for their time and consideration.

Sincerely,

(Signature)

Your Name (Typed)

Use the same heading that you use on your resume.

Use either your SFSU email address or a professional-sounding personal email address.

A cover letter is typically between ½ and 1 page long and 3-4 paragraphs. Do not exceed 1 page.

Conduct a spell check and review very carefully for typos, grammatical errors, and misspelling of names and contact information.

THREE SITUATIONS WHEN A COVER LETTER IS EVEN MORE CRITICAL

1. WHEN YOU NEED TO INCLUDE INFORMATION THAT SHOULD NOT GO INTO THE RESUME

A resume is a business document with strict rules that must be followed. These rules include not writing in first person or including personal information like your desire to relocate. However, there are times when you need to communicate this type of information in order to demonstrate your fit for the position.

Examples:

Your cover letter can be used to communicate your intention to make a transition in your career or move to another city/state.

Your cover letter can also explain away other aspects of your particular career situation that might not be appropriate to include on your resume. For example, if you took some time away from the work force, but have kept your skills and knowledge up-to-date.

2. WHEN YOU WANT TO REFERENCE A NETWORK CONNECTION

There is no right way to include in your resume, "Our mutual associate John Smith referred me to this role and says he thinks I will make a great fit for the job opening." That is a reference line reserved solely for the opening paragraph of a cover letter.

There are multiple ways you can mention a network connection or mutual friend in a cover letter, but such a statement has no place in a resume whatsoever.

3. WHEN YOU WANT TO EMPHASIZE WHY YOU'RE INTERESTED IN THE COMPANY

One way to distinguish yourself as a job candidate is to research the company you are interviewing with and talk about things you like or ask questions about the work they have coming up. This demonstrates your interest in their particular organization as opposed to them being just another job ad you responded to in an attempt to find employment.

You can use your cover letter to show that you've done your homework and see a strong fit with the organization. You can mention being interested in the specific work the company does, recent grants they have been awarded, a product they recently released, etc.

QUICK TIPS FOR SUBMITTING COVER LETTERS

- Check for spelling or grammar errors one more time!
- Save the cover letter file with your name, so it doesn't get mixed up with another applicant's materials (e.g. AliGatorCoverLetter).
- Follow the employer's instructions when submitting your cover letter and other application materials, whether that is sending in either Word doc or PDF format, or applying through an online application system.
- If emailing your application, send a message to yourself first to test that the formatting and attachments are working correctly.