

# Cover Letter Writing Guide

## RUBRIC • HELPFUL HINTS



*A Cover Letter is your formal introduction to employers, graduate schools and scholarship sources; giving the reader insight into your communication skills, interests and skill set.*

*A well-written and tailored Cover Letter addresses the following:*

- *Who you are and how you learned of the opportunity*
- *Why you are interested*
- *What value you can bring to the organization*
- *How you have demonstrated skills the employer requires*

*This Cover Letter Writing Guide includes a COVER LETTER RUBRIC, outlining three levels of writing mastery: Stellar (3), Passable (2) and Unacceptable (1). Read the descriptions carefully and compare your cover letter to each of the corresponding components.*

## FIRST AND LAST NAME

Phone: (000) 000-000      Email: user@email.com  
LinkedIn Profile or e-Portfolio link

Your cover letter and  
resume headings should  
match.

Month DD, YYYY

Contact's Full Name (Include suffix – e.g., Ph.D., Esq.)

Contact's Title

Company/Organization Name

Street Address/PO Box Number

City, State ZIP Code

Dear (Mr., Ms. or Dr.) Full Name **or** Hiring Manager **or** Recruiting Manager:

**Paragraph 1 (Introduction):** Catch the reader's attention with a strong first sentence. State what it is about the role/organization/mission statement that attracts you. Make sure you name the position you are applying for and how you learned of it.

**Rubric:** *Identifies who you are; Identifies position you are seeking and how you heard about it; states why you are interested in the job; has creative wording to attract reader's attention.*

**Paragraph 2 (Skills & Experiences):** Tell your story highlighting the most significant information the employer will find in your resume: training, education, and/or courses or projects that are directly related to the experience you will bring to the position. Do not repeat verbatim what is on your resume. Instead, show off 2-3 qualifications or skills with descriptive statements using concrete examples to make your point.

**Rubric:** *Identifies 2-3 strongest qualifications; illustrates why you are interested in the position; illustrates why this type of job and company.*

**Paragraph 3 (Closing):** Close the letter with a call to action; ask for the interview! Indicate how you would like to follow up: contacting the employer within a certain timeframe or asking the employer to contact you to discuss your qualifications. Provide the best way to be reached and do not forget to thank the employer for their consideration.

**Rubric:** *Refers reader to your resume; thanks reader for taking time to read; is assertive in telling employer how you plan on following up, if contact is known; asks for the interview!*

Regards **or** Sincerely,

Your Full Name

**TIP: Keep the cover letter to one page and no more than 3 – 5 paragraphs.**



# Cover Letter Rubric

	Stellar (3) <i>Will likely land an interview</i>	Passable (2) <i>Needs improvement</i>	Unacceptable (1) <i>Will not be pass initial screening</i>
Format	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Business letter format</li> <li>Your address at the top</li> <li>Date and company address upper left</li> <li>Signature bottom left</li> <li>Grammatically correct/no spelling errors</li> <li>Clear, concise and compelling</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Business letter format</li> <li>Your address at the top</li> <li>Date and company address upper left</li> <li>Signature bottom left</li> <li>Minimal grammar/spelling errors</li> <li>Satisfactory, but not highly persuasive</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Not in business letter format</li> <li>No date or address or signature</li> <li>Multiple grammar/spelling errors</li> <li>Lacks coherence</li> <li>More than one page</li> <li><b>Use of an Internet Template</b></li> </ul>
Salutation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Formal greeting beginning with "Dear"</li> <li>Use of correct titles (Mr., Ms., Dr., etc.)</li> <li>Use of full name, if gender is unknown</li> <li>Use of "Hiring Manager", "Recruiting Manager", If contact name is not known</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Less formal greeting without "Dear"</li> <li>Use of correct titles (Mr., Ms., Dr., etc.)</li> <li>Use of full name, if gender is unknown</li> <li>Use of "Hiring Manager", "Recruiting Manager", If contact name is not known</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No greeting or informal greeting such as "Hello"</li> <li>"To Whom it May Concern"</li> </ul>
Paragraph 1: Introduction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identifies who you are</li> <li>Identifies position you are seeking and how you heard about it</li> <li>States why you are interested in the job</li> <li>Has creative wording to attract reader's attention</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identifies who you are</li> <li>Identifies position you are applying for but does not state how you found the job</li> <li>Vaguely describes why interested</li> <li>Bland and not attention catching</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identifies who you are</li> <li>Does not clearly identify position you are seeking</li> <li>No description of how you heard about the position</li> <li>Does not grab reader's attention</li> </ul>
Paragraph 2: Skills & Experiences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identifies 2-3 strongest qualifications</li> <li>Illustrates why you are interested in the position</li> <li>Illustrates why this type of job and company</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Only 1 qualification identified and it's unrelated to position</li> <li>Restates information and does not add new details</li> <li>Vague explanation of why interested in the position</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Does not discuss relevant qualifications</li> <li>Does not state why you are interested in this position, company, or location</li> </ul>
Paragraph 3: Closing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Refers reader to your resume</li> <li>Thanks reader for taking time to read</li> <li>Is assertive in telling employer how you plan on following up, if contact is known</li> <li>Asks for the interview!</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Thanks reader for taking time to read</li> <li>Leaves the employer to assume a follow up</li> <li>Does not ask for the interview</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Does not thank the reader</li> <li>Does not mention a plan to follow up</li> </ul>

*Cover Letters are approved when a score of 3 is awarded in each section.  
Students should critique their cover letters using this rubric before submitting for review.*

Career Services | [www.ramapo.edu/cahill](http://www.ramapo.edu/cahill)  
Pathways Programs | [www.ramapo.edu/pathways](http://www.ramapo.edu/pathways)



**Career Center (C209)**

(201) 684-7444

[careercenter@ramapo.edu](mailto:careercenter@ramapo.edu)

Hours: M-F: 8:30am-4:30pm

Summer Hours: M-Th: 8:00am-5:15pm

**ASB Career Center (ASB 513)**

(201) 684-7675

[careercenter@ramapo.edu](mailto:careercenter@ramapo.edu)

Hours: M-F: 8:30am-4:30pm

Summer Hours: M-Th: 8:00am-5:15pm