Cover Letters

A **cover letter** is a letter of introduction that accompanies your résumé. Like a résumé, its primary function is to help secure you an interview. Therefore, it should be brief, readable, and to the point. You should work to convince your audience that you are worthy of an interview because you 1) meet the basic job requirements and have something to offer the company, and 2) are authentically interested in the position.

**Format**

Along the left hand margin, enter the following information:
- your names and contact information
- the date
- the name of the contact person and his/her contact information
- “Dear X:”

**Introduction**

In a brief paragraph, state that you are writing to apply for job X (use the official title from the job posting). If you were referred by someone, say so. Otherwise, briefly foreshadow what you will say in the body of your letter: your main skills, plus an explanation of why you are interested in the position.

**Body**

Because most cover letters are one page or less, the body of your letter should likewise be brief (i.e., approximately 1-2 short paragraphs). In the first paragraph, further outline the skills that you mentioned in your introduction. If need be, you may use a separate paragraph for each skill/group of skills. Depending on the length of this information, you may choose to include a section on your interest in the position within the same paragraph, or you may move on to a new paragraph. This section should be specific and efficient. Don’t go on and on about why this is your dream job and you can’t live without it. Just let the employer know that you’ve had relevant experience that indicates to you that you would enjoy the work.

**Conclusion**

Briefly summarize your main points: how you meet the job requirements. Then, politely ask for an interview. End on an upbeat note (e.g., I look forward to speaking with you further about this position). Finally, sign off with a formal “Sincerely” and type and sign your name.
Sample Cover Letter from a Student Applicant

Samantha Marsh
12345 North Street
Seattle, WA 98072

December 10, 2004

Lynn Sheers
170 Dennis Building
University of Washington
Seattle, WA 98155

Dear Ms. Sheers:

I am writing in response to the job listing on the internet for the Teacher’s Aid position at the Institute of Child Development. I am currently a junior in the College of Liberal Arts working toward a major in child psychology, and I would look forward to extending my academic skills in a setting like the ICD.

I have successfully completed the generals for my major. The classes in which I’m currently enrolled are Cognitive Development, Disabilities and Development in Adolescents, Research Methods, and thesis credits for the senior project.

In addition to my academic preparation, I have also gained valuable experience as a volunteer. To begin with, I worked as a Sunday school teacher while I was in high school. As part of this work, I planned lessons and prepared materials for class. Later on, I also worked with the mentally and physically challenged, as part of a project with a local community center. In the position, I took clients on community outings, recorded their behaviors, and administered medication. Finally, I have also volunteered at Children’s Hospital for eight years, where I continue to work to make children’s experiences as comfortable as possible. Some examples of my duties in this position include assisting with craft activities, going for walks throughout the floors, and rocking babies while their parents are out. Overall, these experiences have all been very rewarding. To that end, I would very much enjoy taking on this new position with the Institute of Child Development, in order to combine my community and academic experiences.

I would appreciate the opportunity to meet with you to discuss this position in more detail. Please feel free to reach me at 206-232-7507. I am generally available between 9am-6pm.

Sincerely,
Samantha Marsh