



A World of Opportunities to Explore

COVER LETTER GUIDE

**Aurora University
Career Services
347 South Gladstone Ave.
Aurora, IL 60506
Ph 630/844-5452
www.aurora.edu/career**

According to a national survey, 60% of executives said that cover letters are either equally or more important than resumes. The time, thought and effort it takes to write a strong cover letter is well worth it and an important piece of your job search!

The office of Career Services provides job search assistance to all current students, as well as alumni. Services include one-on-one assistance with resume and cover letters, mock interviewing sessions and information on job search techniques. If you would like to schedule an appointment to meet with a career counselor, please call (630)844-5452. We look forward to helping you make your job search a success!

Preparing Your Cover Letter:

The most important part of preparing your cover letter is preparation. Before putting pen to paper (or fingers to keyboard!), follow these first two steps:

1. Review any and all information you have on the position for which you are applying. Use a highlighter to mark key words and phrases. These will help you identify points you want to "sell" in your letter.
2. Review your own qualifications and select those that relate to the requirements specified in the position description or to general requirements of your desired position, given your knowledge of that particular industry.

Cover Letter Tips:

A. To keep your letter flowing smoothly, watch your transitions. Summarizing paragraphs are good ways to start new paragraphs or introduce new topics ("I believe my work experience has added significantly to my teacher preparation. For example, ..."). Words and phrases such as "in addition," "also," and "furthermore" help provide smooth changes between thoughts.

B. Your cover letter should not exceed one page in length. Always use a standard business format, including single-space typing and block paragraphs.

C. ALWAYS address your cover letter to a specific individual -- avoid addressing your letter to "Dear Human Resources Director" or "To Whom It May Concern" at all costs!

D. Each letter must be written specifically about the job and organization to which you are applying. DO NOT use a form letter that varies only in such details as the name of the organization or position title. Employers recognize these form letters very quickly. They are much more impressed with someone who has taken the time to research and write a letter specifically geared to their job and organization.

F. The style of your cover letter can be conversational but still business-like. Try to avoid a lot of jargon and cumbersome sentences.

G. A cover letter is usually the first thing the person who screens your resume looks at -- be sure to make a good impression!

H. Cover letters should be well-focused (direct the readers attention to your most relevant skills and experiences) and well-researched (demonstrate your knowledge of the company and/or the industry).

Sample Outline

Your Name
Your street address
City, State Zip
email

The date of the letter

Dr. Jane Smith
Personnel Administrator
Organization X
123 Main Street
Aurora, IL 60510

Dear Ms. Smith:

INTRODUCTION - Your opening paragraph should arouse the reader's interest. Tell why you are writing the letter. State that you are interested in a specific position and indicate how you found out about the job. If you have been referred to this company by someone, now is the time to make that point, e.g., "I am writing you at the suggestion of David Jones, who felt that you may have a need in your company for someone with my background and qualifications."

BODY OF LETTER - Your middle paragraph(s) should contain your main selling points. It is here that you will address how you can fulfill the organization's hiring needs. Give detailed information about your relevant qualifications and show the reader why s/he should consider you as a prospective employee. **BE SPECIFIC!**

Typical items include information on your degree and major; other academic highlights and honors; experience and personal strengths. Be sure to approach this section from the perspective of what you can do for the employer not what you want and what you are interested in. **For example:**

Candidate focused: "I am particularly interested in obtaining a nursing position in critical care. My professional satisfaction is at its peak when I am providing patient care in such a fast-paced environment."

Employer focused: "My focus throughout my education has been critical care. It is in this area that I feel I can best contribute to your organization. I am accustomed to a fast-paced environment, am capable of handling multiple tasks simultaneously, and am not intimidated by the rigors of the critical care setting."

It is also a good idea to mention why you are interested in employment with this particular organization. Such a statement demonstrates the amount of research you've done on the organization, which can be seen as an indicator of how interested you are in the position. **For example:**

"I read with great interest the article regarding Organization X in the June 16 edition of the Chicago Tribune. I believe my sales experience in the X industry would be an asset to you as you strive for the 15% increase in market share discussed in the article."

CLOSING - In your closing paragraph, refer the reader to your enclosed resume. Mention your interest in an interview, request an application, or indicate what next step you would like to occur. **For example:**

"I have included a copy of my resume to provide you with some basic information regarding my qualifications and past experiences. I will be contacting you soon to request an interview for the position. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

(Signature)

Your Name