



Kennedy Career Enhancement Series

7 Key Elements of a Successful Cover Letter & Letter of Intent

Header

All cover letters start with a header that includes your contact information. People often use the same header for their cover letter as they use for their resume to create consistency across their entire application. Regardless of the exact format you use, a header should start with your name and include your email, phone number and address on separate lines. Some people include links to their portfolio or social media if that information is relevant to the position. For pharmacy students, we caution using links to personal pages in the header and suggest discussing them during the body of the letter or during interviews if appropriate.

If you have room on the page, you can also include the name and contact information of the hiring manager or company. People usually include employer contact information on their cover letter if they are submitting a hard copy, but this part of the header is considered optional.

An example is provided below. Please note that it's important to put the exact same formatting between the two documents, including fonts, punctuation and text size. While it may not seem like a big deal, it may suggest that you aren't attentive to detail.

CV Heading on Letter:

ASHLEY LEE
MARKETING & BRANDING SPECIALIST

PHONE: (555) 123-4321
ADDRESS: 2465 Ave 2, NYC
EMAIL: info@resumeshoppe.com
WEBSITE: www.resumeshoppe.com

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Company Name
Company Address 1
Company Address 2
City, State, Zip

Traditional Heading:

(Heading)

Your name
Your address
City, province
Postal code

(Date)

Without abbreviations

(Inside Address)

Name of person
Title
Name of company
Address
City, province
Postal code

Greeting

The salutation or greeting of your cover letter is your first chance to differentiate yourself from other applicants by addressing the correct person. Research the name of the hiring manager for each position to show that you have put thought and effort into your application. You can often find this information within the job listing, on the company website or by calling their office and asking. Remember to address the person with the appropriate title (Mr., Ms., Mrs. or Dr.).

If you can't find a specific name to address your letter to, you can personalize the greeting by referencing the specific department you would be working with, such as the pharmacy department. "Dear Hiring Manager" is a standard greeting that is acceptable when their name is not available. Keep your greeting short and professional, using the appropriate honorifics or titles when applicable.

Introduction

The first paragraph of your cover letter should provide the basic details about who you are. Depending on the type of letter, cover letter or letter of intent, additional information should be added in this paragraph. Regardless of the type of letter, remember that it needs to be unique to that company or organization. If you remove the intended organization's name and insert another name, your letter should no longer make sense. If it does, then it is probably not specific enough.

For Cover Letters, include the title of the job you are applying for, a general overview of why you would excel at the position and the reasons you are excited about this specific job. You can mention how you heard about the position and why you decided to apply, which is an especially good strategy if another employee referred you to the position; remember, if the person who referred you has a doctorate it is best to address them as formally as possible. Furthermore, it may be beneficial to begin discussing how this job aligns with your personal values and/or career goals. Review the job posting for the core strengths required for the job and use your introductory paragraph to explain how you exhibit those qualities.

For Letters of Intent, include a general overview of positions or opportunities you are seeking with this organization and why you are excited about working with and/or for them. You can mention any interactions with the organization you've had, how you have seen the organization positively impact individuals you may know, or simply how their organization's values align with your personal values. Review the organization website to understand their values and the work you would contribute to and explain your desire to and qualifications to do so.

Qualifications

In both types of letters, after the introduction, focus on your history and qualifications. This allows you to attract the employer's attention by immediately sharing how you can benefit their team. Provide more details about the information you include on your CV/resume and focus on how your experiences specifically apply to the job. Include stories about relevant projects or situations that give insight into how you solve problems and do your work well. Explain how you contributed to the success of past projects and draw attention to the impact of your actions. If this part seems particularly hard for you, ask current or former colleagues how you contributed to past team successes and what they believed were some of your biggest contributions. Additionally, you may ask professors and preceptors for feedback. If this feels like 'bragging' about yourself, obtaining insight from others can help you feel like you have 'data' to support your qualifications and make it easier to talk about yourself.

Values and Goals

The next paragraph should demonstrate that you understand the company's mission and have done research on the position. Focus on how your goals align with theirs and connect to the elements you like about the company culture. Explain how the work you do can mutually benefit your future and the needs of your prospective employer. This section of your letter allows you to show that you can not only do the job well but can fit in with a team and bring a positive attitude to the workplace. Specifically, for post-graduate training programs such as residencies or fellowships, it would be wise to state short-term goals you wish to accomplish during that program and long-term goals you wish to accomplish after the training.

Call to Action

The final paragraph should summarize your interest and suggest next steps for proceeding with the application. Thank the hiring manager or program director for taking the time to review your application, and express interest in speaking more about the position or scheduling an interview. Your cover letter should cater to how you can benefit the company, so focus on the skills and talent you hope to bring to their team.

Signature

Sign off with a professional closing phrase and your signature or typed name. The best practice is to hand sign the letter, and scan it back in. Just like handwritten notes can stand out, the effort to put in a handwritten signature can help you stand out in a good way. If you're emailing your cover letter, be sure that you do not include an unnecessary email signature. Some appropriate closing phrases are:

- Sincerely
- Best regards
- Respectfully
- Thank you
- With thanks

If you would like someone to review your letter, please **email Pamela Hite at phite@cop.sc.edu** with the following information: your letter, the position or organization and when it needs to be submitted by.

If you are an ACCP student member, they offer a letter of intent review service found here:
<https://www.accp.com/stunet/loi.aspx>.

Additional Resources

<https://www.indeed.com/career-advice/resumes-cover-letters/parts-of-cover-letter>

<https://www.rxashlee.com/blog/writing-a-cover-letter>

<https://www.ashp.org/-/media/assets/new-practitioner/docs/writing-a-letter-of-intent.ashx>