

OFFICE OF CAREER SERVICES AND LEADERSHIP MANAGEMENT

Cover Letter Checklist**Overall Appearance, Format, and Content**

- Use font and formatting that is consistent with your resume
- Organize it as a professional business letter
 - Header: your name and contact information (mimic the resume)
 - Date
 - Inside address: your recipient name, title¹ and contact information
 - Salutation (e.g. “Dear x”)
 - Body
 - Closing (e.g. “Regards”; “Respectfully”; “Sincerely”, etc.)
 - Name
- Avoid generic/template-like language; tailor it to each position and organization
- Focus on the employer’s needs versus your needs²
- Make a clear connection between your specific knowledge, skills, attributes, and experience, and how they can add value to the organization
- Mirror the language in the job description; incorporate keywords
- Don’t reiterate your resume; expand on your bullets and use storytelling to paint a fuller picture of your accomplishments and the skills and approach you used
- Share how your personal values and interests align with the organization’s mission
- Showcase your personality and passion
- Include measurable results and impact, not just actions
- Focus on what can do versus what you lack experience in
- Ensure that the letter is clear, concise, easy to read, and free of typographical and grammatical errors
- Keep it to one page

Opening Paragraph

- Start with a compelling introduction highlighting why you’re interested in the specific position at the specific organization
- Include a “thesis” statement/overview of the key attributes (knowledge, skills/abilities, and experiences) that make you qualified for the position
- Indicate where you found the opportunity
- Mention the name of the referrer, if relevant, in the opening line

¹ When the appropriate contact name is not attainable, the name can be substituted with general titles such as “Hiring Manager”, “Human Resources Manager / Director”, “Clinical Director”, or “Search Committee”.

² The content should be them-focused (e.g. “I would love to *bring my passion and experience* working with youth...”) versus me-focused (e.g. “I would love to work for an organization that will *give me the opportunity* to work with youth.”)

Body

- Option 1: Share a story illustrating how you successfully and/or effectively used relevant knowledge, skills, and abilities in the past, ideally with similar organizations and communities³
- Option 2: Succinctly summarize the most recent and relevant accomplishments applicable to the position, ensuring that you're not simply restating the resume in paragraph form
- Focus on select key competencies; do not attempt to cover your entire career story or every knowledge, skill, and ability highlighted in the job description
- Highlight *applied* knowledge and skills (i.e. practical/professional field-based experiences) versus classroom learning alone

Closing

- Reiterate your passion and excitement for the work and organization and how you're qualified
- Provide current contact details and other information requested, such as salary requirements⁴, graduation date/licensure status, or availability
- Thank the reader for their time and consideration

³ Incorporate the STAR format (Situation/Task, Action, Result) to ensure a clear beginning, middle, and end.

⁴ For salary requirements, you can include a range based on market research or indicate that you are "open to negotiation" or "flexible". If you're in the process of pursuing licensure, indicate that you are eligible for licensure and share where you are in the process (e.g. submitted your documents to the Office of Professions; passed the Masters exam, etc.)