



There are many types of cover letters — for part-time positions, full-time and prospecting.

CHECK OUT COVER LETTER SAMPLES:



Also available on
careerservices.calpoly.edu
as part as our
Career Resource Toolkit.

FOR ADDITIONAL HELP WITH YOUR COVER LETTER:

- Join Career Advising Drop-In to connect with career advisor and review your cover letter.
- Attend a resume and cover letter workshop — find dates and information on Cal Poly Now or MustangJobs.
- Check out our online Career Resource Toolkit.
- Ask an alum in the field you're applying to for feedback. Connect with alumni through Cal Poly Career Connections (in your Cal Poly portal).
- Utilize BigResume (linked in MustangJobs) to help you get feedback on and improve your cover letters.

CONTACT US:



careerservices.calpoly.edu



Building 124



805-756-2501



careerservices@calpoly.edu



@calpolycareerservices

COVER LETTER

Guide and Examples



CAL POLY
Career Services

PURPOSE:

A cover letter introduces you to potential employers and demonstrates how your strengths, skills and experience match the position. Effective cover letters should do the following:

- Demonstrate your genuine interest and research of the organization.
- Focus on the needs of the employer, not your own.
- Be modified and tailored to each position.
- Highlight unique experiences (should not be a duplicate of your resume).

Cover letters are only needed when asked for in the application. There is no need to attach an optional supplemental cover letter as employers likely won't read it.

GUIDELINES:

- 1 page — 8.5" x 11"
- .5" to 1" margins all around
- Size 11 or 12 font
- White paper with black ink (avoid colors)
- Don't start every sentence with "I"
- Follow a standard business letter format
- Submit electronically as a PDF not Word Doc

CONTENT:

Addressing the letter:

- Address your cover letter to an individual by name if possible.
- Do not address the cover letter as "Dear Sir or Madam" or "To Whom it May Concern."
- If you don't know their name, use "Dear Selection Committee" or "Dear Hiring Manager."

First Paragraph: "Why Them?"

- Describe what you are applying for and how you found the position.
- Highlight why you are applying to this company and why you are specifically interested in them (demonstrate your research of the company).
- Include a thesis sentence: The top two or three reasons you're qualified for the position.

Middle Paragraph(s): "Why You?"

- Prove your thesis sentence with concrete examples demonstrating your skills and experience.
- Address specific experience(s) or academic highlights that directly relate to the qualifications the employer is seeking.
- May close with a summary sentence of your qualifications and a confident statement about your ability to make a contribution to the organization.

Closing Paragraph: "Next Steps"

- Reiterate your interest in the position and thank the employer for taking the time to read your cover letter.
- Indicate how the employer can reach you.

FAQ:

1. How long should a cover letter be?

It should be brief, three to four paragraphs, no longer than one page, and should be targeted to the position for which you are applying. Focus on the most relevant aspects of your background that relate to the job opening.

2. The job announcement asked me to include my salary history. What should I do?

Do not write "negotiable." A good answer to this question in your cover letter is: "Based on my research, someone with my education and experience in this location makes between \$_____ to \$_____ range, with appropriate benefits."

3. How can I make my cover letter stand out?

Mention a reference from the company if applicable. Include a specific success story or statistic from your past experiences (e.g., if you surpassed targets or exceeded previous metrics).

4. Are cover letters and CVs the same?

No. A CV (curriculum vitae) is a type of extended resume whereas a cover letter focuses on professional experiences related to the job you are applying to.