



Cornell University
School of Hotel Administration

Career Management
Office of Student Services

Supplement to the Cornell Career Services Career Guide

Cover Letter Writing

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WRITING COVER LETTERS

A cover letter is a brief, introduction that highlights your skills and experience by expanding upon your résumé. The letter introduces you to the company, demonstrates transferable skills you have developed, and promotes special features of your education and experience that qualify you for a particular position within the organization. A well-written letter distinguishes you from other applicants and is equally important as your résumé in a job search. Cover letters should always accompany your résumé when you write directly to a company or when a company requests your résumé as part of the application process. It is your first chance to make a good impression with a potential employer.

If you're submitting a resume through CornellTRAK (on-campus recruiting program), look closely at the application instructions: companies may have specifics on what they may want submitted during the resume drop such as a cover letter, references, transcript, etc.

CONTENT AND FORMAT

An effective cover letter will state:

- *why you are writing, why you are interested*
- *how you can meet the company's needs, and*
- *a follow-up course of action.*

Cover letters should be clear and concise—be organized in your writing and try to limit the letter to three or four paragraphs. Use good judgment with the length of your cover letter. Your cover letter shouldn't be so long that it detracts from the purpose of your letter; one page is typical.

Cover letter examples are included in this handout and in the Cornell Career Services Career Guide. Advisors in the Office of Student Services are available to review and critique your cover letters with you.

GUIDELINES

Opening

- Your letter should be written in a business-letter format.
- Your letter should be written to a specific person in the organization. Write to a person who has the ability to hire you (who may or may not be someone in Human Resources). Avoid using the impersonal "Dear Sir or Madam" or "To Whom It May Concern." If you have any questions about to whom to address the letter, use the resources available at the library, Office of Student Services, or call the company and ask for the correct name, spelling, and title. Personalization is the way to make the best impression.

Body

- Your letter should balance your needs with the contributions you can make to the organization you are applying to. Express your interests, but focus on your qualifications.
- As with your résumé, be prepared to support any information you include in the cover letter. State your experience and how it may benefit the organization, but don't exaggerate.
- Employers are looking for people with excellent communication skills. Your cover letter demonstrates your writing skills, so be sure to pay close attention to grammar, style, and spelling, and proofreading.

- Highlight a special project; this will entice your reader to carefully evaluate you as a candidate.
- If you're sending your cover letter and resume by email, include them as attachments. This will ensure the formatting remains intact. Make your email message short and clear. Indicate the reason for the email and direct the receiver to your attached documents.

Closing

- Indicate that you will call to set up an appointment; do not rely on the organization to get in touch with you—they may not. Ultimately, your success will depend on your follow-up.
- For email, you may include a signature line with your contact information, but avoid quotations, smiley faces, elaborate colors, and designs as backgrounds. Make sure your return email address is professional and businesslike.

HELPFUL SUGGESTIONS

- Keep a copy of all of your cover letters. Create a file to use for easy reference and making notes regarding further contact with the prospective employer.
- Sending an email or fax to a potential employer is considered business correspondence, so be sure to use a professional, formal, business format. Potential employers will use this as an opportunity to judge your communication skills.
- Always follow up your cover letter submission with a phone call or send another email; this will confirm your interest in the position.

COVER LETTER BASICS
FROM CORNELL CAREER SERVICES CAREER GUIDE

<p>Return address indicates where Susan is currently living.</p> <p><i>Address letter to person with hiring responsibility, which may be indicated in the job announcement. If unclear, begin with "Dear Human Resources Director"</i></p> <p><i>Use person's full name if you don't know gender: "Dear Pat Smith."</i></p> <p>Letter opens by stating why she is writing. <i>Identify position or type of work for which you are applying, how you learned of position, and why you're interested in working for the organization. Draw reader in to ensure he or she reads the entire letter. Refer to any contact you've had with the organization, providing names of people with whom you have spoken.</i></p> <p><i>Indicate in the middle paragraphs that you understand position requirements and demonstrate you are a good match for the job. Highlight and expand upon experiences, skills, and interests stated in your resume.</i></p> <p>Concrete examples help demonstrate how Susan's experience has prepared her to fulfill the requirements of the position.</p> <p><i>She summarizes her qualifications related to the position and outlines options for ensuring that an interview will take place. She demonstrated initiative by saying she will follow up with a phone call.</i></p> <p>The inclusion of her resume is noted.</p>	<p>1111 Dryden Road Ithaca, New York 14850</p> <p>February 5, 20XX</p> <p>Ms. Joan Lewis Lower School Director Glendale Day School 85 W. 61st Street New York, New York 10004</p> <p>Dear Ms. Lewis:</p> <p>I am writing in application for one of the six teaching fellowships awarded annually at Glendale Day School. As a native New Yorker, I am familiar with Glendale Day School's reputation for educational excellence; as an alumna of the Dalton School, I know the private elementary school environment firsthand.</p> <p>For some time I have known that I want to pursue a career in teaching and have sought summer employment and volunteer activities with this goal in mind. While working at a day camp for three summers, I learned the patience and tolerance needed for working with children on a daily basis. At Asphalt Green Day Camp, I managed and led a group of thirty children in active learning projects, such as discovery hikes. These projects required the ability to maintain control of the group and to ensure their safety, while facilitating both their education and enjoyment.</p> <p>I have also worked with young children on an individual basis. As a math tutor and as a mentor for troubled children, I have designed activities and lessons for individual youngsters coping with academic or emotional difficulties. Currently, I volunteer three hours a week in a first-grade classroom at a local elementary school, where I have gained experience working with children in a formal classroom environment.</p> <p>Working with young children, whether one-on-one, in groups, or in the classroom, requires patience, energy, and dedication. I believe my paid and volunteer experiences, as described in my enclosed resume, have prepared me for the demands of a teaching fellowship. I would welcome the opportunity to discuss available positions with you and can travel to New York any Friday. I will contact you within a week to arrange a meeting. If you would like to contact me sooner, you can reach me at (607) 555-5555 or e-mail me at xx99@cornell.edu. I look forward to speaking with you. Thank you for your time and consideration.</p> <p>Very truly yours, <i>Susan G. Moore</i></p> <p>Susan G. Moore</p> <p>Enclosure</p>
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Note: Susan is consistent in writing out the state name here and in her resume.

She remembers to sign her name.

SAMPLE COVER LETTER

555 Albany Street
Lexington, KY 55555

Date

Ms. Susan Smith
Managing Editor
Hospitality Today
666 North Street
Atlanta, GA 66666

Dear Ms. Smith:

I was delighted to learn of the *Hospitality Today* Magazine opportunity through the Career Management Office at the Cornell University Hotel School. As a senior graduating with relevant experience, I am confident that my skills and interests are a good match for the position of Assistant Director.

I obtained publishing and operations experience from an internship with Ryan Hotels, a 24-unit hotel chain in the Southeast, specializing in group tours. I spent half of my time at Ryan as an assistant to the marketing director. My duties included updating our tourist brochures and writing press releases. However, I am most proud of a special assignment in which I wrote a feature article and illustrated with my own photographs. One of the newspapers that included my feature article was the *Savannah Gazette* in Georgia. I spent the other half of my time rotating through operations, where I gained a comprehensive knowledge of housekeeping, food and beverage, and the front desk. By combining my publication and hotel operations experience, I will bring valuable knowledge to *Hospitality Today*.

Through my coursework at Cornell, I have gained knowledge and experience in all areas of the hospitality industry. My courses have included Marketing Management, Hospitality Facility Operations, Managerial Communications, Hospitality Financial Management, Culinary Theory and Practice, among others. I most enjoyed my Marketing courses where I learned to express my creativity and communicate those ideas to others.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I have enclosed my résumé for your review and will call you the week of October 19th to discuss this position and my qualifications. Or, of course, you may contact me in the meantime by phone at (607) 555-5555 or email me at xx99@cornell.edu. I look forward to speaking with you.

Sincerely,

Signature

Your Name

Enclosure

SAMPLE COVER LETTER TO ALUMNI

555 Albany Street
Lexington, KY 55555

Date

Ms. Susan Smith
Corporate Events
Marriott Downtown Atlanta
666 North Street
Atlanta, GA 66666

Dear Ms. Smith:

I found your name through the alumni directory in the Career Management Office at the Cornell Hotel School. I am looking for a summer internship that would allow me to build on my event planning experience, and Marriott Downtown Atlanta would be the perfect place for me. Because you are an alumnus of the Hotel School, I'm hoping that you might provide me with information about openings at the Marriott for event planning interns.

Since my junior year in high school, I have had a passion for planning events. I began by organizing school and church functions, and last summer I held an internship with We Cater to You, an independently owned operation in Norcross. During this experience, I helped plan and execute intimate dinners for six and weddings and graduation parties for up to 200 guests. I learned the importance of good planning, teamwork, and satisfying customers' last-minute requests—and I thoroughly enjoyed every project.

This summer, I would like to put my experience to work for a large company such as Marriott. I would be grateful to hear whether opportunities for a summer internship exist. If not, I would still appreciate the chance to speak with you, if only for a few minutes by phone, to hear about your career, your work at the Marriott, and any advice you might offer me as I pursue a summer internship—and a long-term career—in event planning.

I have enclosed my resume for your review and will call you the week of October 19th to discuss potential opportunities and my qualifications. You also may contact me by phone at (607) 555-5555 or email as xx99@cornell.edu. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Signature

Your Name

Enclosure