



# **HOLY GRAIL TO APPLICATIONS**

**PART 2: COVER LETTER  
EDITION**

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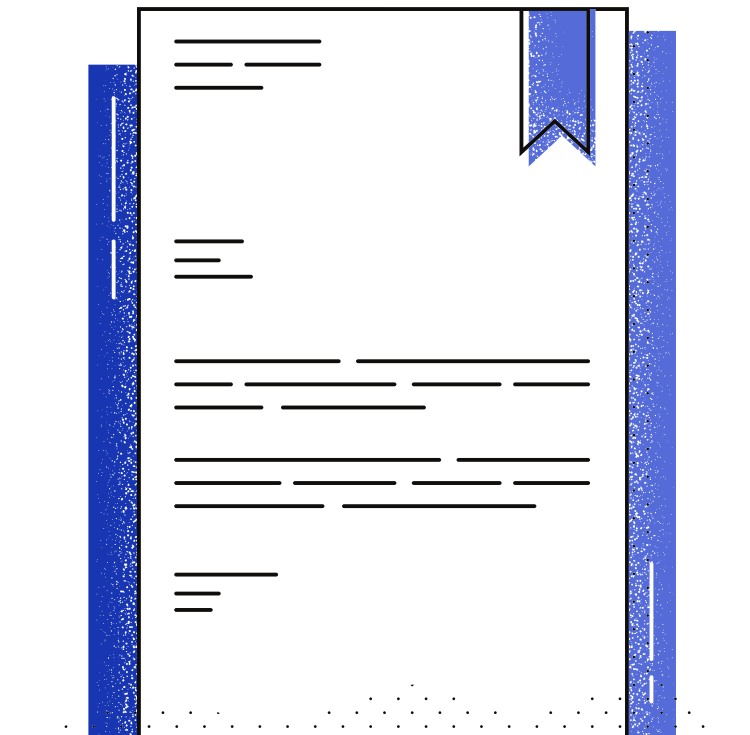
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# WHAT IS A COVER LETTER?

A cover letter is a **one-page document** that accompanies your resume. Where your resume briefly outlines your skills and experiences relevant to the job, your cover letter elaborates on these points and explains how they will benefit you at this job.

In a cover letter, you can explain your particular interest in this position and why you are a great candidate for the job. The purpose of a cover letter is to allow your potential employer to **gain a better understanding** of your qualifications and whether you are a good fit for the job.

Writing a cover letter shows your **commitment** to the job and allows you to stand out amongst the other job candidates.



# 1 | TYPES OF COVER LETTERS

There are four general types of cover letters:

## 1. Application Cover Letter

Application cover letters are usually sent along with a resume or a job application when you are applying to a specific job. It should be customized depending on the job. You should include your work experience, qualifications, skills and why you are a good fit for the job.

## 2. Prospecting Cover Letter

Prospecting cover letters are written by a job seeker to a company of interest. Through this type of cover letters, you are inquiring about open job positions in general rather than specific job postings.

## 3. Networking Cover Letter

Networking cover letters are usually sent to mentors, friends and other contacts to ask for help in job search or advice. These letters can be sent to introduce yourself to people such as future employers who you got to know through a referral; this type of networking cover letter is called a referral networking cover letter. Networking cover letters should be casual and short.

## 4. Email Cover Letter

Email cover letters are informal cover letters sent through email. The purpose of this type of cover letter is the same as the purpose of the application cover letter but there may not be a specific job posting you are applying for. For example, if you wanted to reach out to a professor in one of your courses for a potential research position, you could include your skills and experiences in an email cover letter. There is no specific format for email cover letters. If it is asked to send through the body of the email, you can follow the email format or only include a greeting, simple body and closing paragraph. In this sense, email cover letters may be similar to prospecting cover letters. It should also be short and concise.

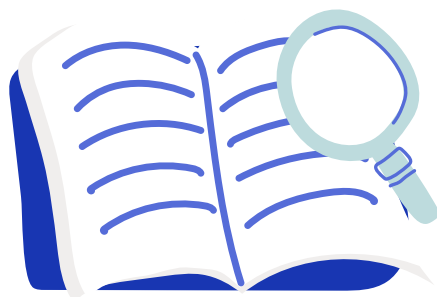
# 2 | START WRITING A COVER LETTER: A CHECKLIST

**Take note of the job's qualifications:** Job postings explicitly outline the skills and traits they are looking for in potential hires. Make a list of these skills and make sure to emphasize these traits in your resume and cover letter.

**Research the company:** Go onto the company's website and do some research into their mission statement, goals, and general values. Your cover letter is a good opportunity to mention that your values align with the company's mission and values. Find out who your cover letter will be addressed to! Try to avoid "To whom it may concern". Find out the company's full address. Reach out to someone who works in the company through LinkedIn to form a good first impression and a potential connection to the company.

**Find a good template:** There are lots of templates available online and on Microsoft Word. Make sure to find a template that looks simple and classy. Make sure you are writing a different cover letter for every job you apply to.

**Pick 2-3 experiences from your resume that you want to elaborate on:** Make sure you choose experiences that demonstrate the skills and qualifications from Step 1. Don't pick too many, cover letters are meant to be only 1 page long. Make sure to explicitly mention why these traits will help you succeed in this position.



# 2 | START WRITING A COVER LETTER: A CHECKLIST

**Have a strong selling point:** Think about what makes you stand out from the other candidates. What are your career goals, hobbies, passions and interests? How do these make you unique and an asset to the company?

**Organize your information into paragraphs:** The introduction should include the greeting, an introduction of yourself and your educational background. The body should include your experiences and you should explain the relevance of these experiences to the job position. The conclusion then includes your "strong selling point" and you should also thank the reader for their time and consideration.

**End:** Make sure your file is named appropriately, it doesn't hurt to include your name, for example, John\_Smith\_Cover\_Letter. Double check your cover letter and resume one more time before submitting and emailing



# 3

## THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A COVER LETTER AND A RESUME

### **Writing Formats:**

Resumes are usually written in bullet points rather than full sentences. This helps deliver your strong points in a clear and concise format.

Cover letters **MUST** be written in full sentences in proper paragraph form. It should be well formatted and neatly broken down to deliver a “selling point” to the specific employer.

### **Reusing Resumes/Cover Letters:**

You are able to use the same resume (with minor changes if needed) to apply to multiple jobs. This is because your resume will include skills and past experiences that may be applicable to many different jobs, and for some of us, we might not have many work/volunteer experiences to be able to have different versions of resumes.

Most importantly, your cover letter must be **DIFFERENT** for each job you are applying to. You want to cater to the specific hiring manager of the job you’re applying for, which gives it a more personal feel to it.

### **Content:**

Your resume should cover a broad area of your abilities, achievements, and other relevant skills for the job without diving into heavy details or specifics. A resume is mainly to see if you have the basic qualifications for the job you’re applying for. Your cover letter will have greater focus on specific skills and past accomplishments that directly relate to the job which you are applying for. A cover letter is mainly to help you stand out from the other applicants with the same or similar qualifications as you by providing specific examples of your past experiences, your interest in the company, etc.

# 4 | DO'S AND DON'TS OF WRITING COVER LETTERS

Do's	Don'ts
<p><b>Explain what you bring to the table.</b> An employer will go through multiple applications and you need to give them a reason as to why you are an ideal candidate.</p>	<p><b>Go into heavy detail about why you need/want the job</b> (ie. "this job is perfect for me..."). Applying to the job implies that you want the job so this would be irrelevant to add.</p>
<p><b>List your specific skills.</b> These skills should directly apply to the tasks you will be performing at the job, and the employer needs to see that you are capable of carrying them out.</p>	<p><b>Make it too long</b> (ideally max 1 page). You should be able to summarize your skills, achievements, and closing statements all within a page - no employer wants to read multiple pages when there are other applications they must go through.</p>
<p><b>Do research on the company</b> you're applying for before writing. Having an idea of what the company is about, their history, whatever products/services they are involved with can help give them a better impression of themselves.</p>	<p><b>Recycle the same information you included in the resume.</b> If anything, you should borrow your strong points from your resume and go into more detail in your cover letter to really sell the employer.</p>
<p><b>Add information</b> that you couldn't include in the resume to make yourself stand out. These can be volunteer experiences, jobs and hobbies, etc which show your uniqueness as a candidate.</p>	<p><b>Talk about salary.</b> Even if the employer does not mention salary in the job description, it's not really your place to ask.</p>
<p><b>Have someone review your cover letter.</b> They might be able to spot any mistakes you may have made, give advice on how to rephrase a few things, etc.</p>	<p><b>Forget to close your cover letter with a strong call-to-action</b> (this is why you should hire me). When writing a cover letter, it can be easy to get carried away talking about yourself and what you have achieved that makes you suitable for the job. However, you need a strong selling point at the end to really convince the employer that you are the ideal candidate.</p>



# 4

# DO'S AND DON'TS OF COVER LETTER WRITING

Do's	Don'ts
<p><b>Make a different cover letter for every different job.</b> You need to cater your writing to the specific job you are applying for, as this helps make the application feel more personal to the employer and you can mention skills that may be necessary for one job, while leaving it out if unnecessary.</p>	<p><b>Use the same cover letter for multiple job postings.</b> Employers will likely notice that you are recycling your cover letter for multiple jobs when they see it begin with "To whom it may concern..", or if they see skills that are added on your cover letter that may not be relevant to the job of interest. Try to make it as specific as possible according to the position you are applying for</p>
<p><b>Write in an active voice.</b> Rather than using words such as "I believe..." or "I think that...", you need to be able to convey your confidence in your ability to execute certain aspects of the job. Try writing "I know that I can do ____ because of my past experiences with..."</p>	<p><b>Write informally.</b> Try to avoid using contractions ("I'm", "it's", etc) and keep your writing very businesslike and formal, since you are writing to someone who is likely a senior employee and likely to be your boss if you do get hired</p>
<p><b>Mention the name of an employee that recommended you</b> for the job (if applicable). If you are lucky enough to have someone recommend you to the employer, definitely make sure to use that to your advantage by letting them know (likely in the first paragraph).</p>	<p><b>Include your references</b> in the cover letter itself. References usually are not asked for until you get an interview, or after you've already done your interview. Make sure to have at least three references ready for if you do get a call!</p>

# 5 | COVER LETTER EXAMPLE: APPLICATIONS

Your Name  
Your City, Province, Postal Code  
Your Phone Number  
Your Email

Date

Name of Employer / Hiring Manager  
Job Title  
Company  
Street  
City, Province, Postal Code

**Date and contact information of the applicant and employer**

Dear Dr./Mr./Ms. Last Name,

**A salutation/greeting including honourifics**

As an advocate for student education, I was delighted to discover your job posting for the position of module designer at Webstraw from my friend Sam on the education team. I am Rachel Francis, a 4th year undergraduate at the University of Western Ontario, currently undergoing a major in Literature. I am passionate about student education and have 3 years of experience promoting quality education to others, particularly youth.

**The opening paragraph stating basic information such as the applicant name, current relevant information about the applicant, where they found the job posting, etc.**

As a Teaching Assistant for competitive dance students, I have experience in modifying my teaching methods to accommodate different students. As the Program Coordinator for Learning it Together, I actively endorse early childhood education in the form of early numeracy and literacy to vulnerable London youth. I have created several successful educational programs that teach young students about topics such as science and climate change in a creative way. One program engaged children by having each child draw a diagram of their house and list ways they could reduce their environmental impact.

**A body paragraph that mentions recent professional job title and relevant achievements and skills**

Webstraw aims to provide accessible, quality education for all and my educational experience in teaching and program designing will ensure my success as a member of the Education Team. Webstraw's mission aligns with my life-long passion to empower others with knowledge and my career goal of becoming a professor. I am confident in my ability to make a long-lasting contribution at Webstraw for our university community. I truly appreciate your time and consideration of my application and look forward to hearing from you.

**A closing paragraph focusing on the bigger picture by mentioning future goals**

Sincerely,  
Rachel Francis

**Closing and sign off**

# 5 | COVER LETTER EXAMPLE: PROSPECTING

Your Name  
Your City, Province, Postal Code  
Your Phone Number  
Your Email

Date

Name of Employer / Hiring Manager  
Job Title  
Company  
Street  
City, Province, Postal Code

Dear Mr./Ms. Last Name,

I am writing to express my passion in the field of education and research, and would like to inquire about a possible opening at Webstraw. Past colleagues of mine have recommended Webstraw to me as a highly respected education-focused organization at the university level. I am extremely interested in discovering more about Webstraw's ideals and goals going forward, and would love to learn if any positions are available.

I am enrolled in a Bachelor's Degree in Medical Sciences at Western University, heading into the final year of my undergraduate program. Currently, I am working a full-time internship at \_\_\_\_\_ while running an executive position as Director of \_\_\_\_\_ at \_\_\_\_\_ (Western club). These experiences have taught me valuable skills that I know will transition well into an opportunity at Webstraw, including problem solving through collaborative efforts, and excellent communication and organizational skills. I am also proficient in Microsoft Excel and currently improving my skills in Photoshop, which will strengthen the quality of visuals and graphics that Webstraw provides for their users.

More of my past experiences, skills, and qualifications can be found on my resume, which has been attached below. I would greatly appreciate the opportunity to meet with you to speak more about Webstraw, the other members within the organization, and further discuss my candidacy for a position. I can be reached via my cell phone (123) - 456 - 7890, or via email abc@def.com.

Thank you for taking the time to consider my application. I look forward to speaking with you further about a possible opportunity at your company.

Sincerely,

Your Name

# 5 | COVER LETTER EXAMPLE: NETWORKING

Your Name

Your City, Province, Postal Code

Your Phone Number

Your Email

Date

Name of Employer / Hiring Manager

Job Title

Company

Street

City, Province, Postal Code

Dear (Mr./Mrs. first name, last name),

I hope everything is going well. As I mentioned to you before, I decided to move to Toronto and I am currently looking for a job opportunity. I would like to work in a clinical environment, ideally as a pharmacy assistant. If you know of any open positions, I would greatly appreciate it if you could let me know.

I would like to get any advice, or contacts that you can share with me. I have attached my resume with this cover letter that highlights my previous experiences and skills. Some of these roles include over 2 years of work experience as a pharmacy assistant, and volunteering as a youth mentor for immigrants. These experiences have strengthened my interpersonal, communication and organization skills. Additionally, I developed Microsoft Office skills and knowledge of medications by organizing inventory and prescriptions.

I am looking forward to meeting with you soon for dinner or coffee. I appreciate any advice or help you can give. Thank you for your time.

Kind regards,

Your name

# 5 | COVER LETTER EXAMPLE: E-MAIL

Subject: Interest in Research Assistant Position

Dear Dr. Hopkins,

I noticed that you were looking for research assistants in your lab via LinkedIn. Based on the qualifications and the aims of your team's research project, I am interested in the opportunity as I have developed the necessary skills through my course work and volunteering positions held at previous labs.

As a biochemistry student, I have learned the foundational knowledge of GPCR signalling and I was particularly interested to learn about its role in innate immunity. Combining the inflammatory response caused by GPCRs and various microbes such as *Streptococcus pyogenes* conducted in your lab, overlaps with my future interests as a researcher. Volunteering at the Fraser lab in Kansas City, I learned a variety of techniques including mass spectrometry analysis, carbon labelling, protein profiling and sequencing. I am confident I can apply these techniques within the projects done in your lab.

I am a passionate and hard-working individual who is dedicated to long-term research within this subfield of biochemistry and microbiology. I have also attached my resume below, for more of a complete profile of my relevant experiences and qualifications. If there is any additional information I can provide, please let me know.

I am looking forward to hearing from you soon.

Thank you for your consideration,

Jonathan Doe  
johndoe@gmail.com  
111-111-1111

# 6 | FAQ

## ***1. Do I have to write a cover letter if it is optional?***

If you want to be a competitive candidate, yes! Despite the fact that certain job postings claim that cover letters are optional, potential employers see the candidates who take the time to write a good cover letter and will definitely factor that into their decision. You should get into the habit of writing a cover letter for every job you apply to.

## ***2. Who do I address the cover letter to?***

You will likely be addressing your cover letter to a hiring manager. To find out who that is, first go back to the job posting and see if there is a name or email. Normally people include their names in their emails but you can search up the email on Google and their name could pop up! If you can't find either of those things, go to the company's website and find their hiring or "Join us" page. If you can't find the name of the hiring manager there then it's also a good idea to just give the company a call saying that you're interested in the new job position and would like to know the name of the hiring manager so that you can address your cover letter appropriately.

## ***3. Can my cover letter be longer than one page?***

No, your cover letter should not be longer than one page. Hiring managers need to read several cover letters for a single job posting and likely do not have the time to read an extensive cover letter. Furthermore, a one-page cover letter ensures that you only include the experience and skills most relevant to the job. Lastly, if you're applying to the job in person, a one-page cover letter means you do not need to print your cover letter on multiple pages and ensures that the hiring manager only needs to glance at the sheet to read it without needing to flip pages.

## ***4. How can you get your cover letter reviewed?***

It is a good idea to proofread your own cover letter first. You can ask friends and acquaintances who have experience in professional fields or recruiting. Also, you can get help from a career centre.

# 6 | FAQ

## **5. Do I need a different cover letter for every job?**

Without a doubt, yes. A cover letter needs to show the employer/hiring manager that you are specifically interested in the position you are applying for. By addressing the employer by name, as well as the company itself, makes your cover letter feel more personal and does a better job of showing your enthusiasm. Furthermore, most job listings have a general rundown of the job description and the tasks you will be performing, so it's very important to talk about your strengths and qualifications for the specific tasks that apply to each job.

## **6. Are there any resources about the cover letter provided by the university?**

Yes! There are lots of services and resources available for Western University students. These resources are not only specific to cover letters, but also resumes, interviews and more.

Check these links:

<http://career.uwo.ca/index.html>

[http://career.uwo.ca/prepare/resume\\_cv/index.html](http://career.uwo.ca/prepare/resume_cv/index.html)

[https://www.eng.uwo.ca/coop/students/career\\_planning/cover\\_letter.html](https://www.eng.uwo.ca/coop/students/career_planning/cover_letter.html)

<https://alumni.westernu.ca/career-management/career-resources/>

<https://alumni.westernu.ca/career-management/career-resources/winning-cover-letters.html>

## **7. What can I do if I have no relevant experience?**

All experience is relevant - the purpose of your cover letter is to draw out connections between your previous experiences, whether they be paid or unpaid, and how they will help you perform at the job you are applying for. For example, something as simple as a part-time fast-food job you held in high school comes with many relevant skills for other jobs, such as good communication skills, time management, and being able to follow instructions clearly. It's all about writing yourself in the best possible way without bending the truth!

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