

# COVER LETTER WRITING GUIDE

**Stanley R. Becker Career Center**



518-388-6176 | [careercenter@union.edu](mailto:careercenter@union.edu) | <https://www.union.edu/offices/career/>

# Cover Letter Writing

A cover letter is a document that is intended to generate interest in you, as an applicant, and get the reader excited about reviewing your accompanying resume/application. The cover letter should succinctly articulate your interest, enthusiasm for both the company/organization and specific position, and demonstrate how your unique background, skills and experiences make you an excellent fit for both the position and organization to which you are applying.

## General Tips

- Expand on your experience and connect your resume content to the position requirements. Do not just repeat your resume or list positions you have held.
  - Describe specific accomplishments, experiences, and skills that demonstrate how you fit the position. Provide examples to support claims; doing so strengthens your candidacy.
  - Cite examples from the most relevant areas of your background, including internship/employment experience, leadership roles, extra-curricular activities and academic/research experiences.
- Prepare a uniquely tailored letter for each position.
  - If including a cover letter in your application package is “optional”, submit one.
  - Never submit a generic cover letter. Tailor each cover letter to highlight relevant skill sets and credentials based upon the job duties/responsibilities listed on the posting.
  - Customize the employer’s information on each individual letter; specify why you are interested in this position at their company/organization.
- Address each cover letter to the appropriate person.
  - Do not use phrases such as “To whom it may concern”, “Dear Sir or Madam”, or “Mr. \_\_ Ms. \_\_ Mrs. \_\_”.
  - Do your best to identify the appropriate person (first and last name) to address your cover letter to. If you are unable to do so, consider using “Dear Hiring Manager”, or “Dear Selection Committee”.
- Keep a copy of every letter you submit.
  - Designate a folder on your computer to save all cover letters you send to employers.
  - If you do not hear from the employer within two weeks, follow up and ask for an update on the status of your application. For examples on how to write this, refer to the Interviewing Guide.
- Pay attention to details.
  - Typographical errors, misspellings and poor word choice will put your application in the “no pile”.
  - Make an appointment with a Career Advisor to proofread and review the content of your cover letter.
  - Have someone read your letter for grammatical errors before sending it out.
- Enthusiasm Sells.
  - Employers want candidates who want to work for them. Show them that you’ve researched their organization and make a convincing case for why you want to work for them.
  - Be professional and courteous, but let your personality come through.

## Formatting Tips

- Use 1” margins all around the page.
- Use 10-12 point font and choose the same style you chose for your resume.
- Use a block style format, and align names, dates and paragraphs along the left-hand margin.
- Keep it to one page (3-5 paragraphs), single spaced.

## Cover Letter Outline

Your Name (optional)

Your Street Address

City, ST Zip

September 18, 20xx (Date you submit application)

First and Last Name of Contact (If you have this information)

Title of Employer

Company/Organization

Street Address, City, ST Zip (If you have this information)

Dear First and Last Name of Contact or “Hiring Director”:

Your opening/introduction paragraph tells **why you are writing** and notes where you learned about the position or if someone referred you. When referring to the position, use the title used by the employer. If someone referred you and no specific title is known, be as specific as possible about the kind of position for which you are applying. Do some research on the organization so that you can state your genuine interest in this particular employer and why it is a good fit for you, not how it will help you.

Your middle/body paragraph(s) should **highlight** examples that demonstrate your relevant experience, background, and/or coursework that will show the reader why they should consider you as a candidate. Be sure to connect your experiences and/or education to the position description. By using examples, show the employer that you have the necessary experience they seek.

You could include another paragraph detailing additional **experience** that will demonstrate or connect your background with the position. For a concluding sentence, summarize the skills and personal traits that you would bring to the job for which you are applying. Also, remember that the reader will view your letter as an example of your writing skills.

In your closing paragraph, **reiterate your interest in the position, thank the employer for their consideration, provide your contact information, and indicate your follow-up action.** State what you want the recipient of the letter to do next (such as contacting you to further discuss the available position) or what you will do next (such as calling to follow-up on the status of your application). Only say you will follow up if you have the contact information and will do so.

Sincerely,

Sign your name (note: if sending electronically no need to include signature)

Your name (typed)

When writing a cover letter, market your experiences, background, and skill set to the specific position to which you're applying. Depending on the position, you may highlight different areas of your academic, work, extracurricular, and/or athletic experiences that better target the skill sets and credentials most pertinent to the specific job or internship to which you're applying. Below is a sample internship description for a position at Ticketmaster. Notice how Wesley, the student whose cover letter appears on the following page, draws a clear link between the skills/experiences detailed in the job description and his own academic background, skill set and campus involvement to make a clear case for his candidacy.

### Sample Internship Description

**Job Title** Marketing/Promotions Intern  
**Company** Ticketmaster  
**Industry** Arts & Entertainment – Other, Retail/Merchandising  
**Job Function** Marketing  
**Description**

As a **marketing** intern for Ticketmaster, you can expect to learn **sales and marketing practices** of the ticketing industry in the world of entertainment. The internship will allow you to enhance your **writing, presentation** and **research skills** as well as learn how to **develop and maintain client relationships**. By the completion of the internship you should know how to determine via **research** what **marketing techniques** to apply to various projects, online placement, discounting, promotions and more. This internship will give you insight and vast general knowledge of **marketing** in live entertainment ticketing; concerts, sports, arts and family events.

*Look for keywords – descriptive action verbs and adjectives defining the main responsibilities and qualifications of the position – in the job description and use them in the body of your cover letter.*

*Notice the skill sets that the position requires. Key terms are bolded and italicized.*

**Position Responsibilities:**

- Track event data and present findings.
- Develop recap materials at the conclusion of a promotion.
- Support product-related initiatives.
- Contribute to website content and the creation of custom webpages.
- Monitor that the Ticketmaster brand is properly represented in client and promotional partners' advertisements.
- Assist with customized **marketing/promotional** presentations.
- Run quality assurance tests.

**Qualifications:**

- Student pursuing a BA/BS degree in related area from an accredited institution.
- Must have a minimum cumulative GPA of 3.0.
- Excellent **organizational, verbal and written communication skills** are essential.
- **Creativity** and strong attention to detail required.
- Proficiency with Microsoft Word/Excel/Power Point and the Internet required.
- Must be able to work in a **team environment** and meet deadlines.

**Additional Information:**

- Scheduling office hours is negotiable per applicant.
- Length of internship: minimum 15 hours per week for 10 weeks.

**Contact** Rosalyn Leiva – East Regional Recruiter

**Note:** Print out the job description for the position you're applying to, then identify and highlight keywords from the posting. This will help you better "target" your cover letter.

# Sample Cover Letter

807 Union St  
Schenectady NY, 12308

September 22, 20xx

Rosalyn Leiva  
East Regional Recruiter  
Ticketmaster

Dear Rosalyn Leiva:

I am writing to apply for the Marketing/Promotions Intern position at Ticketmaster, which I learned about through the Becker Career Center at Union College. I am a dedicated and organized individual who is eager to continue learning more about the marketing field. I am confident that my communication, organization, and creativity skills make me an excellent candidate for this position.

As a sophomore at Union College, my academic experience and extra-curricular engagements have prepared me for this internship. The study of economics has helped develop my **research, analytical and creative thinking skills**, as it has allowed me to contemplate the relationships between human behavior and a variety of environmental and cultural factors. As part of my sophomore research project, I am currently **researching** how companies effectively utilize branding strategies and catchy logos to increase their client base and better capture their target markets. This on-going **analysis** of corporate markets and the knowledge I am gaining regarding effective **marketing** strategies, can directly benefit the Marketing/Promotions department at Ticketmaster.

I have complemented my academic background with strong extra-curricular involvement. As Publicity and Promotions Co-Chair for U-Program, I developed and implemented a **marketing plan** for campus concerts, comedic performances and novelty acts. This required **strong teamwork, organizational and interpersonal abilities** as I interfaced with campus administrators, student organizations and other U-Program members in executing the marketing plan.

I would be a strong asset to the Marketing/Promotions team at Ticketmaster and I am eager to learn more about the position and your department. I welcome the chance to meet with you to discuss how my education, experiences, and skills would be beneficial for your department. I can be reached at (518) 333-6565 or BoothA@union.edu. Thank you for your time and consideration. I look forward to your reply.

Sincerely,

Andrew Booth

*Closing Paragraph: Thank the employer for their time and reiterate your interest in the position.*

*First paragraph: Cite the position you're applying to and reference where you found the opportunity. Display your enthusiasm by stating why you want to work for this particular organization.*

*Highlight skills and pieces of your background consistent with the job posting. Wesley does a good job of linking his own skill set with the needs of the specific position.*

*Demonstrate knowledge gained through coursework.*

*Body Paragraphs: Highlight some of the broader skill sets outlined in the job description, use keywords that are consistent with the job posting and cite examples to support your statements.*

**Note:** All keywords on this cover letter are bolded and italicized for emphasis. Refrain from doing so on your own cover letter.

# Sample Job Description

**Job Title** Full-time Engineer  
**Company** Central Hudson Gas & Electric Corp.  
**Industry** Energy/Utilities  
**Job Function** Engineering  
**Description** Central Hudson Gas & Electric Corporation is seeking Engineers to join our team and fill positions in our Electric System Design (Substation Design, Electric System Protection, or Transmission Design) and Electric System Planning (Transmission Planning, Distribution Planning and/or Operating Engineer) Departments.

## Position Responsibilities:

- Perform engineering assignments relating to planning, designing, construction, operation, maintenance and performance. These may include (but are not limited to): electric substations and related facilities; overhead and underground electric transmission and distribution protective relay systems, **distribution protection systems and automatic control equipment**; distribution automation; telemetering, supervisory, and **communications systems**
- Work assignments may include (but are not limited to): **Prepare basic one-line or block diagrams**; prepare requests for funding authorization, cost estimates, construction plans, designs, specifications, bills of material, material purchase requisitions and delivery schedules; **develop construction and material standards**, and standards of estimating practices and test procedures; inspect material and performance of contractors; **conduct cost analysis** of work orders; develop capacity ratings for various components of electrical systems; investigate planning methods and procedures of the electric utility industry; develop and recommend statements of engineering practices, service standards, and equipment capability standards to be used as a basis for system reinforcement, design and operation; **analyze performance of company's electric facilities**, including malfunction or failure of equipment, and recommend remedial measures; **determine effect of new large loads on system development plans** recommending the method of supply and/or modification as required; electric reliability analysis; and storm response as required.

Identify two or three key responsibilities with which you are experienced.

## Qualifications:

Match the items in this section to your relevant skills and experience.

- Bachelor's Degree in Mechanical or Electrical Engineering (focus on Power is preferable)
- Strong **analytical, organizational and quantitative skills**
- **Ability to work individually** or as **part of a group** on special projects
- Well-developed **written/verbal communication skills**
- Valid driver's license

**Contact** Elliott Rosen

# Sample Cover Letter

Jane Smith  
Union College  
Reamer Campus Center #123  
Schenectady, NY 12308

June 23, 20xx

Elliott Rosen  
Central Hudson Gas & Electric Corp  
284 South Avenue  
Poughkeepsie, NY 12601

*Identify why you're interested in this company.*

*Demonstrate knowledge gained through a significant project at an internship.*

*Introduce your relevant skills to be discussed.*

Dear Elliott Rosen,

Please accept this letter and the attached resume as my application for the Central Hudson Gas & Electric Corporation Engineer position. This is in response to a job posting from the Becker Career Center at Union College. As a mechanical engineering senior, **I am interested in joining a company where my analytical and design skills** will be put to use.

Recently, I completed an internship at 123 E-Design in which I worked on design projects with three team members. We **designed a heat recovery system for a firm to use** to exhaust gases to pre-heat cold, incoming air and save on electricity costs. In addition to analyzing the design and energy requirements, we performed an economic analysis. This experience has transformed my design perspective and strengthened my ability to work effectively in teams.

In the summer of 2015, I received a Davis Peace project grant of \$10,000, to use on a project I identified, and implemented. I gained valuable **leadership skills while overseeing a team of volunteers, setting goals, planning daily schedules, and collaborating with an non-governmental organization (NGO)**. Among many extracurricular activities, I currently tutor other Union students in physics, math, and engineering. This position has enabled me to **sharpen my communication skills, as I continuously seek the most effective way to teach concepts** to students with varying levels of skills and comprehension.

I am interested in the Engineer position at Central Hudson Gas & Electric Corporation, and I possess the skills and experience necessary to succeed in this role. I look forward to discussing my qualifications with you in greater detail. I can be reached at 518-123-4567, or smithj2@union.edu. I will follow-up to ensure that you have received all of my application materials and to answer any questions you may have. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Sign your name (note: if sending electronically no need to include signature)

Jane Smith

*Discuss course projects to highlight analytical and teamwork skills.*

*Use extra-curricular activities to illustrate leadership and communication skills.*

**Note:** All keywords on this cover letter are bolded and italicized for emphasis. Refrain from doing so on your own cover letter.

## Sample Internship Description

<b>Job Title</b>	WFPG General Internship
<b>Company</b>	Women's Foreign Policy Group (WFPG)
<b>Job Function</b>	Government
<b>Description</b>	It is crucial to ensure that women's voices are heard and women leaders are fully engaged on key policy decisions. At WFPG, we advance women's leadership through exposure to international issues and mentoring programs. A key player in broadening the constituency for international affairs, WFPG brings together participants from across disciplines and links women domestically and internationally. We believe that through highlighting women leaders in foreign policy, we provide important role models for the next generation and create a vital network of women from different sectors, generations, and backgrounds.

WFPG is looking for responsible and motivated interns to focus on planning and outreach for programs featuring international affairs officials and experts. In your cover letter please indicate your availability and include a copy of your unofficial transcript in your e-mail to Patricia Freeman at

[Freemp@WFPG1.org](mailto:Freemp@WFPG1.org)

### Responsibilities:

- Assist with our Author and Embassy Series **programs**
- Contribute to Celebrating Women Leaders Benefit **Luncheons**
- **Research** foreign policy topics before events
- Assist in **media outreach** and the production of our newsletter
- Update the WFPG database and webpage
- Complete other **office tasks** as assigned

*Identify two or three key responsibilities with which you are experienced.*

### Qualifications:

- Competitive candidates should have a **demonstrated interest in foreign affairs**
- Computer skills (MS Office Suite & Internet Research)
- Outstanding office and phone manners
- **Excellent writing skills**
- **Well-organized, punctual, dependable, flexible, and attentive to detail**
- **Ability to work independently and as part of a team**

*Match the items in this section to your relevant skills and experience.*



## Sample Cover Letter in the body of the e-mail

Dear Patricia Freeman,

I am applying for the Women's Foreign Policy Group (WFPG) General Internship position as a part of the Union College D.C. Spring Term Abroad program. Your nonprofit organization's mission calls for the participation of women in international affairs, and I know that the **combination of my extensive knowledge in political science, Africana studies, and global humanitarian crises** will make me an asset to your team.

In one of my courses, we focused on famous Supreme Court cases, where I analyzed and reviewed case documents. I **wrote a twelve-page memoranda** for two hypothetical cases focused on equity laws. In my Model United Nations course, I was on a committee of eighteen students representing Haiti. These courses transformed my **international perspective** and strengthened my ability to work effectively in stressful situations. I am a **motivated individual** who is interested in **furthering my knowledge in foreign affairs and policies**.

During my time as a Visitor Experience Associate in a Children's Library, I gained valuable **interpersonal communication skills** due to interacting with hundreds of visitors regularly. Additionally, through my executive board position in the Women's Union, I have strengthened my ability to **work independently and as a team member on tasks** for our bi-monthly, campus-wide educational events. These skills, combined with my ability to **be flexible**, will allow me to succeed when assisting with multiple event series, and administrative tasks.

I am confident that I would thrive in the culture at WFPG because of the **mutual values in bringing people together** from diverse backgrounds and **advancing women's leadership** opportunities/skills. I am interested in learning more about the position, professional growth, and development provided through this internship. As requested, my availability is Monday to Thursday from May xx-September xx, 2019 and my unofficial transcript is attached to this message. I can be reached at 123.456.7891, or greenf@union.edu. Thank you for your time and consideration. I look forward to your reply.

Sincerely,

Francis Green

**Note:** All keywords on this cover letter are bolded and italicized for emphasis. Refrain from doing so on your own cover letter.

## Cover Letter Sentence Starters

As stated earlier, the purpose of the cover letter is to get the reader excited about your candidacy and make them want to read your resume. You should communicate your relevant qualifications as they fit the needs of the position, while also expressing your enthusiasm for the particular organization and/or career field. Because knowing what to say in a cover letter can be difficult, we've listed a number of "sentence starters" to aid you in matching your unique background, skill set, and qualifications to the needs of the position and employer. Use these sentence starters as examples when drafting the three parts of your cover letter: the introduction, the body and the closing paragraph.

### INTRODUCTION

- It is with great interest that I am applying for the position of \_\_\_\_\_.
- (Name of contact) provided me with your name and suggested I contact you in reference to the \_\_\_\_\_ position.
- As a recent graduate of Union College with a degree in \_\_\_\_\_ and an avid (reader, writer, sports enthusiast, etc.), I am confident that I am a strong applicant for the position of \_\_\_\_\_.
- As a (marketing, research, congressional, etc.) intern with (name of organization), I gained valuable experience in \_\_\_\_\_ that makes me an ideal candidate for the position of \_\_\_\_\_.
- I am eager to apply for the position of \_\_\_\_\_ because I have the \_\_\_\_\_ skills that will allow me to be successful in this role.
- Thank you for speaking with me on (date) and discussing the \_\_\_\_\_ position. I am interested in \_\_\_\_\_.

### BODY

- My experience as a \_\_\_\_\_ will help me to contribute \_\_\_\_\_.
- Throughout my four years of undergraduate study, I have demonstrated skills and abilities that are what the position of \_\_\_\_\_ demands.
- I can contribute to your organization's effectiveness by \_\_\_\_\_.
- My previous success in \_\_\_\_\_ has proven my ability to \_\_\_\_\_.
- Working with \_\_\_\_\_ has strengthened and improved my (analytical, research, interpersonal, organizational, etc.) and (analytical, research, interpersonal, organizational, etc.) skills.
- I am confident that I can be a valuable asset to your organization because \_\_\_\_\_.

### CLOSING

- I am eager to learn more about \_\_\_\_\_ and would like to discuss my qualifications and interests with you.
- I believe my \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ skills make me a strong candidate for this position.
- I am very interested in the position and I would appreciate the opportunity to further discuss my qualifications with you. I can be reached at (phone number) or by (email).
- I will contact you within the week to (verify that my application materials have been received, answer any questions you may have, inquire as to the next steps, etc.).

### SENTENCES THAT CAN BE USED IN MULTIPLE PARAGRAPHS

- I would like the opportunity to put my skills, drive and enthusiasm to work as a \_\_\_\_\_ for \_\_\_\_\_.
- This role combines my skills in \_\_\_\_\_ with my passion for \_\_\_\_\_ and I am thankful to be considered for this position.
- Being (a team player, results driven, a quick learner, etc.) who loves challenges, I will \_\_\_\_\_.

## Additional Tips

- Make sure to do background research on the company/organization. If they are public (versus private), you may want to know stock price, number of employees, recent news, etc. Your letter should include at least two lines regarding why you want to work for the organization.
- Make sure that your cover letter relates specifically to the job description and the organization by including key words/skills.
  - Print the job description and highlight key words and phrases (especially in the requirements/qualifications section). Look at the themes and trends you see (things that are mentioned numerous times) i.e. leadership or particular field related skills such as laboratory work.
- Avoid recreating and reiterating your resume- emphasize and highlight a few of the trends and themes from the job description.
- Include key accomplishments, skills, experience, and exposures that are relevant to the opportunity of interest.
- You can highlight your interest in the position, potential opportunity, organization, and/or industry.
- You can emphasize some of your skills that are relevant to the organization based on the organization's site (i.e. team work, communication skills, writing ability, leadership, etc.), job description, or discussion you had with an alumni who may work at the organization.
- See the writing center to help increase the effectiveness of your document.

## Other Kinds of Letters

You may also need to use and should understand how to write: letters of interest/inquiry and referral letters. Below, are explanations of what each are used for along with one example.

Letter of Interest/Inquiry: You can send this letter to an organization you're interested in. You may want to know if there are any opportunities open that fits your needs, skills, and abilities. In this letter, you should convey why you are interested in a specific company/organization, that Union college is on a trimester schedule, and indicate what opportunities you would specifically be interested in i.e. internship, shadowing experience, seasonal or part-time employment, full-time employment, volunteering, etc.

### Sample Letter

June 23, 20xx

Dear Christine Wannawork,

Last week I read about your organization's internship training program on LinkedIn and am writing to inquire about the possibility of openings. I am currently a Union College Sophomore majoring in Psychology, and I am very interested in opportunities that would allow me to utilize my interpersonal communication skills in addition to giving me deeper exposure to the field of counseling. Internships, shadowing, and volunteer experiences are of great interest to me.

Recently, I completed an internship at Guild Support Services in which I managed a team of four. We designed a three-tier program for victims of domestic violence that would help them cope, understand how to find services, and provide support through the process. This experience has strengthened my ability to work effectively in teams, understand the management process, and allowed me to exercise my oral and written communication skills.

I can be reached at (518) 555-0025 or [LPeter@ymail.com](mailto:LPeter@ymail.com). I look forward to an opportunity to discuss my qualifications with you in greater detail. I have attached my resume to this email, please let me know if you have any questions for me or if you would like any additional information. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,  
Peter Lighthouse

Referral Letter: You can send this letter to professional contacts or those who may be able to point you in the right direction of who to speak in order to obtain information about a specific opportunity. You can also indicate the name of someone who may have recommended that you contact them. You may want to know if there are any opportunities (internships/jobs) open that fit your needs, skills, and abilities. In this letter, you should convey that you are interested in speaking with this connection to learn information about them, their role, and their field.

### Sample Letter

May 18, 20xx

Dear Robert Canterbury,

My professor at Union College, Dr. Keri Longfellow, recommended that I reach out to you regarding positions with your company in the sustainability department.

I am currently a Union College junior majoring in biology and will be graduating June 20xx. I am passionate about the environment and helping to reduce my college's carbon footprint. In one of my courses titled \_\_\_\_\_, I worked on a team of five to design and propose a plan for increased recycling on campus. We successfully increased the amount of recycled materials by 8% over the last year.

In addition to my coursework and involvement in orchestra, I am the founder and student advisor for the Environmental Club in which I manage our budget, staff volunteer opportunities, and reach out to collaborate with local sustainability organizations. I was also co-chair for the enviro-clean donation event in which we raised over \$400 to donate to local organizations to help support them with their go-green campaigns. These experiences have strengthened my ability to work effectively in teams and allowed me to exercise my interpersonal communication skills.

I very much would like the opportunity to speak with you about your company and opportunities in sustainability. I see on your LinkedIn that you also graduated with a bachelors degree in Biology and would like to talk to you about how that helped you get into your field. I can be reached at (518) 515-6820 or [JessiLP@yahoo.com](mailto:JessiLP@yahoo.com). I appreciate you taking the time to read my e-mail.

Sincerely,  
Jessi Purello