

Suggested Outline for Cover Letters, Maximum Length, 1 page

Use the below format or any suggested letter writing format to begin your letter

(the Purdue Online Writing Lab, OWL: <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/>, is a great general writing resource):

Your Street Address, City, State ZIP

(203) Your Phone

Your email@yale.edu

Month 12, 2012

Addressee First Last, Title
Company
20 Street Address
City, State ZIP

Dear Mr. Smith;

Note on Salutation

- If you cannot find the name of a person to address letter to, it is acceptable to use a general salutation such as “Dear Hiring Manager,” or “To The Search Committee.”

The Body of The Letter

Paragraph 1: Why are you writing? Why are you interested? What will you bring to the table?

- If applying for a posted job, name the position and where you found it (i.e. job board, F&ES faculty, etc.—both the title of position and source are extremely helpful for human resources staff who may be the first readers of your letter). Briefly state why you are interested in the company and what you can offer them. i.e. “I’m very interested in Green Company’s sustainable packaging practices (show that you’ve done a little research into the company) and am confident that I will bring valuable experience and technical skills to the Project Manager position.”
- If you are inquiring about non-advertised opportunities, indicate how you became interested in the organization (eg. “I heard Jerry Greenfield speak at Yale School of Management last year about spirituality in business, and am very interested in learning about internship opportunities at the Ben and Jerry’s Foundation.”)
- If you were referred, mention who referred you.

Paragraph 2: What do you have to offer the employer? A clear, concise summary of relevant skills and experience will peak the employer’s interest.

- Working from a job description or based on your research on an employer, enumerate your MOST relevant experience as it relates to the job description. Use keywords found in the description or on the company’s website. Eg. If writing to Ben and Jerry’s Foundation, write about how you are interested in supporting “constituent-led organizations” rather than “community-based”—use their phrasing.
- This paragraph will be somewhat general (almost list-like—save the detail for paragraph #3) and will typically include your degree from Yale, top past experience, top focal/knowledge area, technical and interpersonal skills as related to the position’s qualifications and description. Quantify your experience here, i.e. 2 years of laboratory research, several student-consulting projects with corporate clients.

Paragraph 3: Give a more detailed description of one or two project/work/knowledge-based examples and briefly convince the employer why you are qualified for the position.

- Select one or two examples that support your claims in paragraph 2. If you write that you have 3 years of project management experience in #2, you might elaborate on that experience here. Select *salient* details and mention how your past experience and knowledge will translate to this new position.
- Connect your past experience, skills and new knowledge/experience from F&ES with this organization to show how you would be a successful/valuable employee. Take the time to edit this paragraph down to relevant, concise but detailed experience.

Finishing Touches

Paragraph 4: Conclusion

- Reiterate what you bring to the position—re-word the summary you've claimed in paragraph #1.
- Thank the person for their consideration and write that you look forward to hearing from them soon or that you would welcome the opportunity to interview.

The closing

- "Sincerely" or "Best Regards." About four lines underneath the closing, type your full name as it appears on your resume, and sign above your typed name in black ink if sending by mail.

Adapted and expanded by Kathy Douglas, Senior Associate Director, CDO, Yale School of Forestry & Environmental Studies, from **Killer Cover Letters and Resumes**, Wetfeet Insider's Guide