Tips for Writing Your Cover Letter

Make it Personal

- Figure out why the company appeals to you, don't just repeat a boring citation from their website.
- Use the research you did to show your enthusiasm and make a personal link between the company and something you've done.
- Good background research about the job and company will help you speak to the qualities and attributes that the employer may be looking for.
- Use relevant examples.

**Poor personal link:**

"Campbell Soup Company has a long history of providing consumers with high quality products at an affordable cost."

**Good personal link:**

“Campbell Soup Company has a long history of demonstrating a strong social conscience through such outreach programs such as “Labels for Education” and “Stamp out Hunger”. I too am involved in my community through the local food bank and would take great pride in working for an organization that strives to assist members of its community.”

Go for Clarity

- Get to the point and clearly establish why you're writing.
- Be specific.
- Use simple business language. Use common action words and short sentences. Don't use cliches.
- Minimize "I" statements.
- Read your letter out loud to yourself. If it is hard to read out loud, it's probably too wordy and needs to be edited.

**Poor example:**

With the Ministry of Agriculture, Food, and Rural Affairs committing to cases such as the Growing Forward Agreement and the Ontario Ethanol Growth Fund, they are helping to expand various agricultural programs and facilities. As a result, OMAFRA helps to strengthen the agricultural food sector of Ontario, as well as improve food safety in its rural communities. As a Bachelor of Commerce Marketing Management Co-op student I am interested in the Junior Project Analyst position that was posted on the University of Guelph Recruit website. I would take great pride in tackling the
challenges provided to me and using my knowledge of verbal and written communication skills to contribute to this opportunity.

**Improved example:**

As a Bachelor of Commerce Marketing Management Co-op student I am interested in the Junior Project Analyst position with OMAFRA. I would take great pride in working for the Ministry, and look forward to using my communication skills to make a significant contribution. I am especially interested in the new sustainability project which was launched in September, 20XX and would value the opportunity to play a part in its development.

**Be Professional**

- No spelling or grammar errors.
- Follow business letter formatting, sign your letter and use the same font as your resume.
- Maintain a balance between professionalism and friendliness.
- Vary sentence structure.
- Talk about what you can do for them, not what they can do for you.
- Don’t try to be funny.
- Be careful not to come across as arrogant.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Poor Example</th>
<th>Problem</th>
<th>Suggestion for Improvement</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“In my position, I was required to be courteous, conscientious and energetic.”</td>
<td>Remove the term “required”. Saying you were “required to be courteous” indicates that you were forced to do it, rather than it being natural. Name the position rather than being vague.</td>
<td>“In my position as cashier, I was commended for my ongoing courteous, conscientious and energetic attitude”</td>
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<td>“Although I am not familiar with SAS, I am familiar with other statistical programs”</td>
<td>Never talk about the skills you don’t have. Speak only in positive terms about what you can bring to the employer.</td>
<td>“I am quite familiar with a number of statistical programs, and am currently developing my expertise in SAS.”</td>
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<td>“I did a design plan as part of a class project.”</td>
<td>The term “did” is vague. It does not describe your skills or abilities.</td>
<td>“As part of a 2nd year Engineering project, I created a design plan that...”</td>
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<tr>
<td>Comment</td>
<td>Improvement</td>
<td>Revised Comment</td>
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<td>“This position is exactly what I've been looking for and I know that I’ll really enjoy it!”</td>
<td>Too writer centered. Your cover letter should focus on what you can bring to the employer and how you will be an asset to them. Focus on what you can do for them, not what they can do for you.</td>
<td>“I look forward to meeting with you to further discuss how I can contribute to the ongoing success of Macintosh Enterprises.”</td>
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<td>“I have many skills in research, design, development, etc.”</td>
<td>The word &quot;many&quot; is ambiguous. Don't use &quot;etc.&quot; in your cover letter. Clearly outline the skills and abilities you have.</td>
<td>“I am skilled in research, design and development and will bring four years experience to your organization.”</td>
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<td>“I've got a lot of experience working in the hospitality establishment”</td>
<td>This is not specific enough about your areas of expertise. Add quantifiers to show how much experience or skills you have.</td>
<td>“With my two years experience working in both hotels and restaurants, I bring experience working with customers, dealing with cash transactions...”</td>
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