

ALUMNI ASSOCIATION OF THE UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

COVER LETTER GUIDE



OVERVIEW

While your resume summarizes your background and qualifications, your cover letter explains why you're sending a resume. You should always include a cover letter in a job application! The cover letter lets you connect the dots between your experience and the job you're applying for, while demonstrating enthusiasm and insight. Whether new to the job market or looking to make a career move, this resource will help you make a strong first impression.

FROM THE TOP

HEADING

Contact Information

Date

Address of the company/organization

If possible, use the name of the person in charge of the unit or department/name of the hiring manager. You can find this information online, such as on the company's website or directory. Including this information signals the seriousness of intent. If you cannot find a name, "Hiring Manager" will suffice.

EXAMPLE

Maize A. Blue
200 Fletcher St
Ann Arbor, 48109
800 847 4764
example@gmail.com

September 1, 2025
Ms. Smith
Wolverine Inc.
1000 Job Rd.
Chicago, IL 62249

INTRODUCTION

Provide a greeting to the specific person with whom you are corresponding. If no name is available, "Dear Hiring Manager" will suffice.

State the position you are applying for and how you found it. If you heard of the position via a professional connection, check with them and ask if you can mention them here.

State how your experience matches the position. Include two to three key qualifications you will address in the rest of the letter (these items should match your resume).

EXAMPLE

Dear Ms. Smith:

I was elated to hear about your new position as LEAN Manager from my colleague, Natalia Medina, who works in the St Mary's Health System Operations Team. I would like to meet with you to discuss this opportunity further. With the advent of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, the position presents an excellent opportunity to work on some of the complex challenges currently facing the healthcare industry and St Mary's. My 10 years of experience as a healthcare operations consultant and manager have given me the depth and breadth of skill and expertise St Mary's needs to tackle challenges, including rising budgetary constraints and system inefficiencies.

MAKE YOUR CASE

BODY/ARGUMENT

Tailor your cover letter to the company and position to be more effective (through company research via informational interviews, website review, and online reading). Do not use the same cover letter for different job applications.

Recognize organizational needs (as mentioned in the job description) and claim how you can help them (that you have the matching skills).

Give specific examples to support your claim.

Refer to your resume (do not repeat it verbatim).

If your resume includes gaps in employment or cannot make direct connections to any of the required or preferred job competencies, use the body of your cover letter to provide additional explanations or clarify competency connections to your skillset.

EXAMPLE

After speaking with Ms. Medina, it seems St. Mary's is facing some unique goals, which include St. Mary's goal to increase profit through eliminating waste and reducing inefficiencies by reaching a six sigma level of 3.5- an inspiring organizational goal. My LEAN Six Sigma Master Blackbelt certification and 10 years of experience teaching and applying LEAN principles in practice lead me to believe my background and skills closely match this goal. This is further illustrated by the 2-year project I led with the University of Michigan Health System regarding inventory management of heart apparatuses at the Cardiovascular Center. This process improvement project enabled the organization to save \$1.6M annually by uncovering a series of complex suboptimization flaws, resulting in re-engineering order entry processes. These data collection skills, value stream mapping, advanced root cause analysis, and change management will help St. Mary's achieve its short-term budget constraints and long-term goal of achieving a 3.5 sigma level.

CLOSE STRONG

CLOSING

Close with a strong reminder of why you are a good match for the job and the organization.

Request an interview in some way.

Provide contact information.

Express appreciation for consideration.

Sign your name and print it underneath.

EXAMPLE

I believe my work experience in LEAN will provide the leadership needed in your Operations team for St. Mary's to attain its waste reduction and streamlining goals. I look forward to meeting with you to discuss the position and ways I can support St Mary's further. You can reach me at 000 000 0000, or by e-mail at maizeandblue@email.com. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Maize A. Blue
(Enclosure)

FORMAT & STRUCTURE BEST PRACTICES

We suggest a conventional approach to cover letters. While there may be creative positions that call for a different approach, the majority of applications call for a traditional business format. Impress readers with excellent content and elegant, clear formatting.

- Single-space your cover letter.
- Leave a space between each paragraph.
- Leave three spaces between your closing (such as "Sincerely") and typed name.
- Leave a space between your heading (contact information) and greeting ("Dear Mr. Smith")
- Either align all paragraphs to the left of the page, or indent the first line of each paragraph to the right.
- Use standard margins for your cover letter, such as one-inch margins on all sides of the document.
- Center your letter in the middle of the page; in other words, ensure that the space at the top and bottom of the page is the same.
- Sign your name between your salutation and typed name.
- Include the word "Enclosure" after your name to indicate the inclusion of a resume.
- Always match your resume's paper and font style to your cover letter.