COVER LETTER TIPS

GOAL
To demonstrate how your skills, abilities, qualifications, and competencies fit the requirements, and to persuade the employer to offer an interview.

-OR-
To seal the deal when employers are deciding between a few equally qualified candidates based on résumés.

PURPOSE
- Market your skills to an employer; continue selling your brand.
- Your brand sets you apart from others; it is a consistent message; carry your brand from your elevator pitch through your résumé, cover letter and interview.
- Highlight softer skills (interpersonal, leadership, teamwork).
- Use subjective language. Don’t get too wordy. Business language is clear, concise and tight.

TYPES
- Internship/Job Application Letter
- Informational Interview Letter
- Networking Letter
- Thank You Letter – include something about your conversation to distinguish you.

*If you know a recruiter well, you can use his or her first name.

STRUCTURE
- One page only, printed on quality paper.
- Three to four paragraphs elaborating on skills, talents and strengths.

- 1st paragraph – introduce yourself and identify the job to which you are applying. The first paragraph should contain:
  - An opening line that tells the reader why you’re contacting him or her and how you came to know about the position.
  - Text that indicates your respect for the firm’s accomplishments, history, status, products or leaders, and how the firm’s accomplishments relate to you. This is where you want to show the research that you have done and your knowledge of the company and industry.
  - A closing transition line that will set the stage for your 1-2 experience paragraphs to follow.
  - For example:
    - “My experiences with ____ and ____ enable me to be a qualified candidate for this opening.”
• **2nd (and possibly 3rd) paragraph** — sales pitch, why you are the best candidate; elaborate on and connect experience.
  - **These body paragraphs allow you to make more expansive and revealing statements about who you are, what skills you bring to the job, and how you can help the firm.**
  - Each paragraph should include one experience, provide details on the work from that experience, and include any skills used or gained from that work.
  - Make sure to tie those skills back to how they can be beneficial to the firm in the particular position.
  - Avoid repeating what is on your resume.

• **3rd (or 4th) paragraph** — conclusion, reiterate interest, how you will follow up, thank the reader.
  - Express confidence that you are a qualified candidate.
  - When mentioning your follow up, be specific in terms of when and your method of following up, ex. “I will follow up with you next Monday, October 14, by phone.”
  - Be sure to follow through on promises to follow up. Failing to adhere to this promise can remove your candidacy altogether.

• Close with “Sincerely,” and skip 2-4 spaces before entering your typed name. If you are mailing the letter, sign in between Sincerely and your name. If you are submitting the letter online or emailing you do not need to sign.

**ADDITIONAL TIPS**
- Pick one or two key points on your résumé to highlight your skills.
- If you do not know the contact’s name, address the letter with “Dear Hiring Manager:”
- Update the date before you send the letter.
- The phrase “I believe” is weak. Be proactive and aggressive, example: “my skills…”
- Read the job description to get a feel for the ideal candidate for paragraphs 2 and 3. Remember, it is not about what you can gain from the job.
- If you haven’t heard anything in two weeks, follow up.
- 80 percent of jobs are not posted online.

**COMMON MISTAKES (what you shouldn’t do!)**
- Stating what you hope to gain.
- Being too passive in closing.
- Mass-producing cover letters. Each letter should be specific to an opening.
- Not knowing your unique selling proposition.
- Having grammatical, spelling, punctuation or spacing errors.
- Not editing letter for word choice (key words).