GOAL
To demonstrate how your skills, abilities, qualifications and competencies fit the job or internship requirements so that you stand out from the competition.

PURPOSE
• Market your skills to an employer.
• Highlight soft skills (interpersonal, leadership, teamwork, etc.).
• Brand yourself: showcase your unique enthusiasm for a specific position.

TYPES
• Application letter
• Informational Interview letter
• Networking letter
• Thank you letter — include something about your conversation to distinguish yourself (if you know a recruiter well, you can use his or her first name)

CHECKLIST
• Individualize each letter and keep it to one page.
• Keep a copy so when you’re talking with an employer or a recruiter, you’ll know what you wrote.
• Address the recipient by name (look online or call the company).
• If you are unable to obtain a contact name, you can use “Dear Sir/Madam” or “To Whom It May Concern.”
• Business language is clear, concise and tight; don’t get wordy.
• Include specific examples (accomplishments, qualifications) when referring to your skills.
• Avoid overusing “I.”
• Use transition words and phrases as well as action verbs and adjectives to make your letter more interesting.
• Check and recheck; proofread for spelling, grammar and punctuation; ask others to proof it for you.

COMMON MISTAKES (what you shouldn’t do!)
• Using a “standard” cover letter — you only get one chance to make a first impression, which is why it is crucial to tailor your cover letter to each and every employer and position.
• Stating what YOU hope to gain.
• Being too passive in closing.
• Mass-producing cover letters.
• Having a letter that contains grammatical, spelling, punctuation or spacing errors.
• Not editing the letter for word choice (key words) — search the job description for requirements and key technical, job-specific words (for example: C++, R, HTML, Creo CAD Software, VHDL, Verilog, Matlab, Soldering, Microsoft Excel, Six Sigma).
STRUCTURE

[Your name and address as they appear on your résumé]

Date

Contact Person, Title
Company Name
Address
City, State Zip

Dear Mr./Ms./Dr./Hiring Representative (Contact Person):

First Paragraph – Introduction
Establishes the purpose of your letter and explains why you are interested in the position, and why
the employer should be interested in you for the position (interests, previous experience). The first
paragraph should include:
• Begin with an opening statement of why you are writing by naming the specific position or larger
career aspirations.
• Explain how you heard about the position employer and why you are interested in working with
their group in this role.
• Insert a brief sentence that gives your degree, major, college affiliation and graduation date.
• Mention the contact person from whom you learned about the position (if applicable).

Second (Possibly Third) Paragraph – Sales Pitch
Generate interest with content that demonstrates you have researched the company, and that you are
able to align your skills and interests with the company:
• Indicate how you can help the employer achieve organizational goals in your specialty; focus on
what you can do for them rather than why you want the position.
• Highlight your most significant accomplishments, abilities and experiences that are specifically
relevant to the employer and job requirements.
• Do not simply restate your résumé; rather, elaborate and explain important, job-relevant experi-
ences and personal qualities that cannot be indicated on a résumé.
• As an engineer, your writing skills are important; the cover letter is a means to show employers
that you have this skill.

Final Paragraph – Closing
State your commitment to action:
• Take the initiative to make clear what happens next; for example, indicate that you will be con-
tacting them to ensure that they received your résumé and/or to clarify any additional questions.
• Indicate that you are grateful for their consideration, and that you look forward to hearing back
from him or her.

Sincerely,

Your Name