



# Cover Letter Guidelines for International Students

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In the United States, most employers require applicants to submit a cover letter with their resume. The purpose of a cover letter is to explain how your experiences, skills and previous accomplishments connect to the position that you are applying to get. Below are several tips you should use when writing a cover letter.

## FORMATTING

Cover letters are typically 3-5 paragraphs in length. The formatting should follow [standard business format](#). This means all items should be single spaced, aligned to the left of the page, and include contact information of the person to who you are writing. Your font should be no smaller than 10 point font, and you should try to keep at least one inch margins on the side. **Cover letters should be free of spelling and grammatical errors.**

You should carry over the header you created for your resume onto your cover letter. The header should include your name and contact information (U.S. address, phone and email).

You should also continue to use action verbs/active voice when writing your cover letter. You can find a list of active verbs through [Optimal Resume](#) or the [International Center website](#).

## FIRST PARAGRAPH

The first paragraph of your resume should introduce you to the employer and explain why you are interested in the position. Think of this as your thesis statement for why you would make a great candidate. You should also let the employer know if you were referred to the company/organization by anyone.

## MIDDLE PARAGRAPH(S)

Think of the middle of your cover letter as a way to showcase the qualifications that you have for the position. This means connecting your professional experiences with the qualifications mentioned in the job description. You should use these one to two paragraphs to highlight work that you have done and expand upon your resume. You should avoid facts that are already outlined on your resume by focusing on key concepts. **Each cover letter you send should be tailored to fit each job in which you are applying.**

## LAST PARAGRAPH

The last paragraph of your cover letter should thank the employer for their time and consideration. You should also mention how the employer should contact you in order to schedule an interview. Lastly, you should give one final statement for why you think you would make an excellent candidate for the opening based on the information you gave in the previous paragraphs.

## PROFESSIONAL TIPS

Here are some other helpful tips to creating an eye-catching cover letter:

- Connecting qualifications on a job description with experiences you have already had.
- Clearly explaining why you would fit into the culture of an institution based on their mission
  - You can usually find a company's/organization's mission statement on their website.
- Salutations:
  - Find a person at the company to address your cover letter to. If you know their name, address the letter to "Ms." Or "Mr."
  - DO NOT use greeting such as "Ma'am", "Sir", "Respected Sir", "Respected Ma'am", etc.
  - **If you do not know who to address your letter to, use the Human Resources department's address and your salutation should read "To Whom It May Concern:"**