



Cover

Letter

 Essentials

**Center for Career Connections**

**Phone:** (425) 564-2279 | **Email:** careers@bellevuecollege.edu

**Visit webpage** <https://www.bellevuecollege.edu/careers/> **to:**

* Schedule an on-campus, virtual or phone appointment to get help with your resume, cover letter, LinkedIn, interviwing skills, and college application essays
* Find out about events like job fairs, workshops, and classes
* Use [HANDSHAKE](https://joinhandshake.com/)to find jobs and internships

Learn about **Academic Internship Program:** <http://bellevuecollege.edu/internships>

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| **Purpose of a Cover Letter**  |

**Job seekers often don’t give enough attention to their cover letters.** This is a way for employers to weed people out, so you should make sure this document is **well-written** and **specific** to the job to which you are applying. The purpose of a cover letter is to convince an employer to call you for an interview. It should not simply repeat what is on your resume. A cover letter should address your qualifications specific to this job and show you know something about the company.

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| **Basic Rules for Cover Letters**  |

* Always send a cover letter, even if the job advertisement doesn’t ask for one. A cover letters will help you stand out because it provides more detail about how you fit an employer’s qualifications.
* Do not send a generic cover letter. Employers can spot a generic cover letter from a mile away, and they don’t like it. It’s effective when you create a new cover letter for each job for which you apply.
* Most experts say that cover letters should be one page, three to four short paragraphs and under 150 words. The idea is that your cover letter should fit one computer screen in length.
* **Do not simply repeat what you have written in your resume.** Instead, use this opportunity to bring your resume to life by adding information not on your resume that shows how you meet an employer’s qualifications. Use simple direct language to a) demonstrate your interest and enthusiasm for the position and b) explain why you are uniquely qualified for the job. A successful cover letter highlights and enhances the information on your resume, and targets it toward the prospective employer.
* It’s okay to let your letter reflect your individuality. Do not be aggressive, overbearing, overly confident, familiar, or cute, and don’t write your life story.
* Use the same font that you used in your resume. Many people use the same heading that is on their resume (name, phone, email) and put it on the top of their cover letters. It’s like having your own personalized stationary, and if your documents get separated, they are easily identifiable.
* Use perfect grammar, spelling, and punctuation. You want to stand out by having professional, mistake-free, visually appealing documents. Proofread it before sending it to anyone, and have a friend, family member, or Specialist in the Bellevue College Career for Career Connections proofread it before sending it to an employer! If you need help with grammar, visit the BC Writing Lab: <http://bellevuecollege.edu/writinglab/>

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| **Tips on writing cover letter**  |

* **Research:** Find the company online and read their ‘About Us’ page and mission statement. In your letter, you’ll want to appeal to the company or department’s mission/values/goals if possible. Looking at their web site may also help you identify other types of positions available within that particular company.
* **Personalize:** Cover letters should be addressed to a specific person whenever possible. Try to find the hiring manager’s name and email address on the company’s web site. Or you can call them *once,* but do NOT harass the company just to get a name.
* **Qualifications:** Use the required and preferred qualifications in the job posting to help you write the letter. The content of your letter should describe how you meet those requirements. If there are too many topics to address in your letter, pick two or three of the most important to address specifically and then summarize the rest if you have space. Remember, the letter should be brief. It is always appropriate to refer the reader to your resume to avoid repeating things like your college degree. You should provide **additional** information about your education and/or prior work experience that is not on your resume if it will help the employer understand how you meet required and preferred qualifications.
* **Key Words:** Use key words from the posted job description. Your cover letter may be put into a database and by using critical key words it is more likely that your cover letter and resume will be found in a search for qualified candidates.
* **Avoid Repeating**: Avoid starting every sentence with “I” – turn the focus to what you can do for them. For example, change “I have expert knowledge of Photoshop” to “Your marketing department would benefit from my expert knowledge of Photoshop.”
* **Soft Skills:** Prove you have soft skills (like communication) by saying what you did that utilized these skills.
* **Address Issues:** Address any weak spots in your resume, but remember – don’t get too personal.
* **Follow up:** We don’t recommend that you say you call them in a week, especially if it’s a large company. They most likely don’t want you to call, unless it’s a really aggressive sales position.
* **Error Free:** Read the letter out loud to help you catch mistakes and/or identify any awkward sentences. Have a friend or family member (or Career Specialist) proofread it. There is no excuse for spelling errors!
* **File Format & Name:** If sending your documents as an attachment, name the documents appropriately, such as “Jane Doe Admin Asst Cover Letter.doc” Demonstrate your file management skills while making sure they can identify the document on their computer without having to open the document.

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| **Ways to submitting your application materials**  |

* **Online Form:** Create a plain text version of your cover letter with simple formatting before you copy and paste it into the form. Other options are to create a PDF of your letter and upload it or scan a copy of your resume using a scanner and upload it as an attachment (this way you can sign it).
* **Email:** Always follow the directions provided in the job posting. If there are no specific directions, use one of these two ways to apply by email: 1) Send your resume and cover letter as attachments. When sending an attachment, it is ideal to create a PDF file so that your formatting is retained. Write a brief message for the body of the email. 2) Copy and paste your letter directly into the body of an email (use simple formatting) and attach your resume. Both methods are appropriate.
* **Snail Mail (USPS):** Use this method if explicitly instructed to or if there is no online form or email option. Use a full-sized manila envelope so you don’t have to fold your documents, and type or print the label.
* **Hand Deliver:** This is an effective method when an employer is local and you have a short deadline**.** Use a full-sized manila envelope to keep your documents flat, and type or print the label neatly.

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| **Contents of a Cover Letter**  |

* **Letterhead:** Your resume and cover letter should match. This means use the exact same type style, type size(s), spacing and organization for both. Always include~~s~~ your name, email, and phone.
* **Date:** If you are sending your letter as an attachment, make sure you put the date as the first line under your letterhead. If you paste your cover letter into an email you do not need to date the letter since all emails are automatically dated when sent.
* **Company Name & Address:** Do some research if you don’t have this information. You should be able to find the company’s address on the internet or by calling them.
* **Greeting:** Personalize the greeting with a name whenever possible. When using the person’s name, always use the formal address which is either “Mr.” or “Ms.” (Never use “Mrs.” unless you know the person is married.) If you do not know the name use “Dear Recruiter”, “Dear Hiring Manager”, “Dear Search Committee”, “Hello”, or “Greetings”. Do not use “To Whom It May Concern” or “Dear Sir/Madam” because these are considered old fashioned.
* **Paragraph #1:** This paragraph (and all subsequent paragraphs) should be written in a confident manner that shows enthusiasm for the position. Begin bytelling why you’re writing, and the name of the position (and job number if applicable). Based on your research of the company, mention its needs and how you can contribute to their success by summarizing (in one or two sentences at the end of the paragraph) how your education and work experience have prepared you for the position.

🡪 Drop names in the first paragraph if you know someone in the company. Hiring managers take unsolicited resumes more seriously when they assume you were referred by one of their employees or customers.

* **Paragraph #2:** For individuals who are currently in school or have just graduated, describe how your recent education has prepared you for the position. *Emphasize the skills and abilities gained from your education that relate to the job for which you are applying.*

For individuals who have been out of school for a while, use paragraph #2 to describe how your work experience has prepared you for the position. Identify the skills and abilities developed through experience that relate to the job for which you are applying.

🡪 Entice the reader to find out more about you by reading your resume. And remember that the reader will view your cover letter as an example of your writing skills.

* **Paragraph #3:** Individuals with extensive work experience may need a second paragraph to describe how you meet the employer’s qualifications. For students and recent graduates, use the third paragraph to discuss internship experience in your field and work experiences that have developed relevant skills/abilities related to the position as well as foundational work place skills such as reliability, responsibility, leadership, and honesty. Include volunteer experiences if appropriate.
* **Paragraph #4:** The conclusion should be concise. Briefly restate your interest (one sentence) and let the reader know what you want (an application, an interview, an opportunity to call). If you have a portfolio (this is particularly important for arts related positions such as graphic and interior design), mention you will bring it to further demonstrate your skills and abilities. Close your letter with something like: "I look forward to hearing from you soon." and "Thank you for your consideration."
* **Closing:** Always use “Sincerely.” If you are emailing your documents, you can use a font signature if you like, or scan your signature and insert it as an image.

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| **Ask Yourself These Questions**  |

* Knowing *only* what is on your resume and cover letter, would you hire you?
* Do you clearly qualify for the position?
* Is it obvious that you value *this job* and *this company*?
* Do you stand out in a stack of 100 cover letters?
* Is everything perfect? This is a test of your writing skills, as well as your ability to pay attention to details.

Don’t disqualify yourself! Read and re-read the application instructions, and make sure you’ve done everything they requested. **The number one way people disqualify themselves is by not following instructions.**

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| **Thank You Letters**  |

After a job interview, send a follow-up or thank you letter addressed to the person(s) who interviewed you. Thank the interviewer, express your continued interest in the position, and include any additional relevant information, which you may have overlooked during the interview. **Send the letter within 24 hours of the interview.** This is good practice and helps the interviewer(s) to remember you and to understand that you are motivated, courteous, and responsible. Follow-up letters can be emailed, typed and sent in the mail, or hand-delivered to the office. Keep in mind that spam filters often block unfamiliar email addresses so you cannot be sure that your email will been seen plus it is very easy for people to hit the delete button without viewing your message. Personally addressed letters, both mailed and hand delivered, are much more likely to be read.

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| **Acceptance Letters**  |

When you are offered a position and you decide to accept, send a letter of acceptance to the company, addressed to either your future supervisor or the personnel officer who offered you the position. Let the employer know when you can begin and that you’re looking forward to joining the company or organization.

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| **Declining a Job Offer**  |

If offered a position and you do not want to accept it, let the employer know as soon as you have made the decision to decline the position. Thank her or him for offering you the position. You don’t have to give details on why you’re declining the position, but this helps you maintain good relations with the company. Who knows, maybe there will be a job there in the future that you really want!

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| **Sample Cover Letter** |

Sometimes it helps to see an example. Below you will find a sample job advertisement, as well as a sample cover letter. Notice that the cover letter directly addresses the qualifications in the advertisement. Here are some other things to keep in mind when looking at the example:

* Do NOT just plug your information into this template. Give your documents your own style and demonstrate your writing skill.
* Different circumstances require different approaches. Your cover letter may need to look drastically different depending on your industry, age, experience, skills, etc.
* You don’t know if the employer will read the resume or the cover letter first, so both must clearly outline your qualifications.

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| **Sample Job Advertisement**  |

**Accounting Intern Wanted:**

Small accounting firm is looking for an accounting intern. Qualifications include:

• Associate degree in Accounting or Finance (or nearing completion of degree)

• Advanced MS Excel, Access, and Word required, Peachtree knowledge a plus

• 2+ years of professional work experience

• Effective oral and written communication skills

• Self-motivated, high energy, and excellent organization skills

Email resume & cover letter to: lpalm@evergreenaccountingservice.com

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| **Sample Cover Letter**  |

##### Sarah Sample

Cell: (206) 596-5984 | jsample@email.com

February 20, 2016

Ms. Louise Palm

President & CEO

Evergreen Accounting

10028 South Kensey Avenue

Renton, WA 98124

Dear Ms. Palm:

I am pleased to apply for the accounting internship advertised on Bellevue College’s CONNECT web site. Having reviewed both the job description and your company’s website, I am confident that the skills I developed while earning an Associate of Arts Degree in Accounting coupled with my prior work experience have well prepared me for this position.

While in the Accounting program at Bellevue College, I acquired the skills, abilities and knowledge needed to be a successful intern at Evergreen Accounting. Through this program I gained a thorough knowledge of PeachTree, Excel, Access, Word, and QuickBooks. I also studied federal and state income tax regulations which means I have a better understanding of the bigger picture of the work you do at Evergreen.

In addition to my education, I have four years of office administration experience. As the Lead Receptionist at Media Link, I polished my oral and written communication skills. I was recognized by my supervisor as being highly organized and reliable. I was twice selected as Employee of the Month. Clients often commented on my upbeat and helpful attitude.

I am a highly-motivated professional, and I am eager to apply my knowledge and skills as your intern. I look forward to speaking with you about the position and how I might be able to contribute to the success of your firm. Please contact me at your convenience to schedule an interview. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Sarah Sample

Sarah Sample

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| **Internet Resources**  |

**OWL (Online Writing Lab) at PURDUE**
 This cover letter workshop at the online writing lab on the Purdue University website offers a comprehensive guide to tips, formatting and what to include and exclude in cover letters.

 <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/723/03/>

**How to write a cover letter**

 A great article from Harvard Business Review on how to write a cover letter.
 [**https://hbr.org/2014/02/how-to-write-a-cover-letter**](https://hbr.org/2014/02/how-to-write-a-cover-letter)

**Make an appointment** in the Center for Career Connections to see a Career Specialist who will review and give you feedback on your resume.

 Select from the following:
 • **Online** appointment:

 [Center for Career Connections Online appointment](https://outlook.office365.com/owa/calendar/MichaelReese%40BellevueC.onmicrosoft.com/bookings/)

 • **On-campus** appointment:
 (The Center for Career Connections main campus location is in the U Building, Room 304)

 [Center for Career Connections - On Campus](https://outlook.office365.com/owa/calendar/CenterforCareerConnectionsOncampus%40BellevueC.onmicrosoft.com/bookings/)

 • Call the Center for Career Connections at (425) 564 2279 to make an appointment.