

OFFICE OF CAREER SERVICES

COVER LETTER TIPS

The cover letter is a way to introduce yourself and your resume to a prospective employer. Your main reason for writing the letter is to demonstrate your interest in the position and highlight points of interest in your background that match the employer's requirements for the position. Cover letters also offer an excellent opportunity to demonstrate your writing skills and showcase your personality.

1. Always write a succinct but tailored and powerful cover letter to accompany your resume, whether you contact the employer by email or other means, as directed by the employer. The cover letter should not present the same information in the same way as your resume (i.e., narrating the resume bullets), but rather complement the resume by presenting conclusions based on your experience and/or by telling a story regarding your experience and the job requirements.
2. Send your cover letter to a specific person and always check for correct spelling of the name, correct title, and correct address. Use the phrase "Dear Hiring Manager" to begin your letter only if a contact name is not available; avoid using "To Whom It May Concern" or "Dear Sir/Madam".
3. The cover letter should be one page only and should always include your contact information in case it becomes separated from your resume. Feel free to also include your LinkedIn URL in the contact info if you regularly maintain your LinkedIn page.
4. **Paragraph #1:** Mention the position you are applying for and the name of the person who referred you to the employer (if applicable). Introduce yourself using an identifier statement (one sentence that describes who you are and what you offer) that is compatible with the position requirements. Lastly, include specific information about the employer and why you are compatible with them and/or why you were compelled to apply to the position and company.
5. **Paragraph #2 and #3:** Identify the three to four skills needed for the job and highlight your background as it relates to the job position requirements and qualifications that the employer has described in the job opening announcement. To add more focus to your cover letter, include research about the company and how this information pertains to your application and qualifications for the position.
6. **Paragraph #4:** State your interest in the position again and that you look forward to speaking to the employer soon to discuss your qualifications and how they match the requirements for the position. Close with a call to action, such as that you look forward to meeting for an interview. Be sure to thank the employer for consideration of your credentials.
7. If the employer requests a salary requirement, quote a salary range within paragraph #4. You may speak to a career adviser, professionals working in your field, or websites like www.glassdoor.com or www.payscale.com to research current salary ranges. Also see the *Salary Surveys* fact sheet on the OCS website for more resources. If a salary history is requested, include the information in a separate document. List the organization, your title, and your salary for each position. If you have primarily held non-paid or stipend-only positions, let the employer know that this is not indicative of your current market value. References also should also be listed on a separate document.

8. Always proofread! Check for spelling, grammar, typographical errors, and consistent formatting. Use spellcheck, but also have your resume and cover letter reviewed by a few other people. Example: "Collage" is a word, but you may have wanted to use the word "college". Be sure to use the same font and font size that is used on your resume.

9. Answer these questions to be sure the employer will know the 6 "W's" after reading your cover letter:
 - What position are you applying for?
 - Where did you hear about the position?
 - Who are you?
 - Why are you interested?
 - Why should the employer consider you for the position?
 - When are you going to follow-up?

Enclosed: Five sample letters

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212-854-4613 | Fax 212-854-6190 | sipa_ocs@columbia.edu | sipa.columbia.edu/ocs

Sample Cover Letter Inquiring About Potential Full-Time Positions

533 West 112th Street, #8E
New York, NY 10025

February 10, 2018

Mr. Akira Arioshi, Country Manager
European Bank for Reconstruction and Development
One Exchange Square
London EC2A3EH

Dear Mr. Arioshi,

I am writing because of my strong interest in obtaining a Project Associate position with your organization, particularly in the Prague office. Richard Stern, who was my professor at the Central European University in Prague, suggested that I write to you. I have also learned about your organization's activities during my work with the National Agency for Privatization (NAP) of Romania, and I am particularly familiar with the technical assistance programs that your organization undertook in my country.

I am interested in applying for work with the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) because of your experience in the Czech Republic, particularly in reforming the state sector. I am especially impressed by the flexibility and efficiency of EBRD, given that it is a relatively new organization. Lastly, I am aware of the expertise and excellent work of your staff.

As you can see from my enclosed resume, after working with the National Agency for Privatization, I studied and worked for one year at the Central European University in Prague. I have also published several papers on privatization in the region. I am currently a graduate student at the Columbia University School of International and Public Affairs in New York. My areas of focus include International Economic Policy and Eastern Europe. My coursework has provided me with the skills necessary for a better understanding of economic transformation in the region. I believe that my practical experience and my academic training would thus allow me to contribute to your organization.

I would very much appreciate the opportunity for an interview. I will be in Prague between March 12-16, and then in Bucharest until March 22, should you wish to meet then. In the meantime, please feel free to contact me via telephone at (212) 866-1493 or email at dm499@columbia.edu.

Thank you for your consideration. I look forward to talking with you soon.

Sincerely,

Dana Minar

Sample Cover Letter Applying to a Full-Time Position

3151 Broadway, Apt. 4C
New York, NY 10027
212-855-5843
jg@columbia.edu

May 6, 2018

Ms. Paula Gallagher
Director of Recruiting
Deloitte LLP
Two Tower Center Boulevard
East Brunswick, NJ 08816

Dear Ms. Gallagher,

It is a pleasure to write to you and express my interest in the Consultant position offered by Deloitte's public sector practice. After speaking with Mr. Patrick Cline at the information session he conducted at Columbia University's School of International and Public Affairs (SIPA) and learning about how Deloitte values relationship-building, I felt compelled to apply to your firm. Over the past six years, I have developed a strong network both within consulting and among the many industries your firm represents.

In May, I will receive a Master of Public Administration degree from SIPA, with a concentration in Urban and Social Policy and a specialization in Management. These studies grew out of my education reform work and new school development in South Africa. While there, I directed an education enrichment program that included teacher training, curriculum development, and direct instruction. It was a formative and consuming experience which demanded that I gain the trust of educators, politicians, parents, and students. The program established goals, communicated a strategy, and effected change by building on the stakeholders' strengths. After two years, self-sustaining reforms were established that continue to benefit children.

While in South Africa, it became clear that effective school reform depends on systemic growth in other public sectors, including health services, employment initiatives, and infrastructure and environmental development. To learn more about these public sector services, sharpen my analytical skills, and learn new strategies for organizational change, I enrolled at SIPA. Appropriately, I have developed my abilities in quantitative analysis and financial and organizational management. Furthermore, I have applied these skills through continued work with public service organizations. I would like to apply this experience and scholarship to the challenges that face the public sector and education system and believe that consulting provides an exciting opportunity to accomplish this goal.

With objectivity, strategic thinking, and an articulated vision, cooperative change can happen, and I would like to guide the direction of this change. It is my sincere hope to have the opportunity to do so with Deloitte. I would appreciate the opportunity to meet with you to discuss this opportunity in further detail. You may reach me at 212-855-5843 or by email at jg@columbia.edu.

Thank you for your time. I look forward to speaking with you soon.

Sincerely,
Jeffrey Gerson

Sample Functional Cover Letter Applying to a Full-Time Position

463 E. 11th Street, #2A
New York, NY 10003
212-444-1212
ag@columbia.edu

January 11, 2018

Ms. Dana Grube, Recruiting Coordinator
Mercer Management Consulting
2300 N Street, NW, Suite 800
Washington, DC 20037

Dear Ms. Grube:

I am writing to express my interest in obtaining an Associate position with Mercer Management Consulting. I will graduate from Columbia University's School of International and Public Affairs (SIPA) in May 2011 with a Master of Public Administration degree in International Finance and Economic Policy. I believe my strong academic background, personal initiative, and work experience would be an asset to Mercer. As indicated in my resume, I have many skills that could contribute to your organization:

Analytical skills: In my most recent position working at the New York City (NYC) Department of Finance, I analyzed current inefficiencies in revenue operations and offered alternative solutions. I spent several weeks at the Department of Health, Environmental Control Board, Parking Violations, and the Department of Consumer Affairs analyzing current processes and conducting operational analysis. I used the information gathered at these on-site visits in Joint Application Design sessions, offering solutions and suggesting alternatives aimed at improving customer service and streamlining revenue collections. Currently, the New York City Department of Finance is implementing many of my recommendations, and I was invited to return after graduation as a Senior Analyst.

Teamwork/Leadership: The successes of many projects I have conducted at SIPA have depended on teamwork. In most of my classes team projects are required and involve project planning, task delegation, formal presentations, and open lines of written and oral communication. My professors and peers frequently appoint me team leader.

Communication: My experience working at a boutique law firm and at an investment management firm provided me with substantial experience communicating with clients and top management. In both positions, I spent a great deal of time on the phone and in meetings with clients discussing their concerns and relaying this information to management.

I am attracted to Mercer because it is a fast growing, innovative firm. It is distinguished from other consulting firms in that it has many other subsidiaries, as well close ties with its parent company, Marsh & McLennan, which provides information and resources. I believe the analytical skills I acquired through my experience improving operations at the Department of Finance and the knowledge I am obtaining about management analysis in my current coursework would make me a valuable addition to your consulting team.

My resume is enclosed for your review. Thank you for your time and consideration and I look forward to speaking with you.

Sincerely,
Anne R. Garay

Sample Email Requesting an Informational Interview

Dear Ms. Shacoy:

I am currently a first-year Master of Public Administration (MPA) student specializing in Social Policy at Columbia University's School of International and Public Affairs. After discussing my career interests with Professor Julie Brown in the Department of Financial Management, she recommended that I contact you. I am particularly interested in the financing of education within New York City and the role of the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) in this process. I would very much appreciate the opportunity to talk with you about your experience at OMB, and in particular with the education task force.

As you indicated your willingness to speak with MPA students through the SIPA Alumni and Student Network on LinkedIn, I would like to speak with you to learn more about the actual work that your task force performs. Your advice on the skills and coursework necessary to contribute effectively as an entry-level analyst and suggestions on appropriate internships to pursue would also be very helpful. To provide you with some sense of my background, I am enclosing a resume.

Thank you for your consideration. I look forward to talking with you soon.

Sincerely,
Paige Collins
(212) 555-6789

Sample Cover Letter Inquiring About a Summer Internship

400 West 119th Street, #15V
New York, NY 10027
(212) 864-3771
ys22@columbia.edu

February 9, 2018

Mr. Franklin Davis
The New York Times
229 West 43rd Street
New York, NY 10036

Dear Mr. Davis:

I am writing to you because of my strong interest in working as a summer correspondent for your paper, specifically at the Tokyo bureau. As a Japanese journalist with fluent written and spoken English, I have been fascinated by the excellent and expanding coverage of Japan by your Tokyo-based American correspondents. I know first-hand how difficult it is to report in a foreign country. As a native who has observed Japan from both inside and outside the country, I feel that I could enhance your coverage of Japan.

After more than five years with *The Japan Times*, Japan's highest circulation English-language newspaper, I have enrolled as a mid-career fellow at Columbia University's School of Journalism. My studies are focused on international affairs and I expect to complete my graduate degree this May. As a journalist in Japan I covered a variety of topics including defense, European politics and Japan-US trade relations. Through my course work at Columbia I have had the opportunity to closely analyze the writing styles of Japanese and American journalists and have successfully adjusted my writing to be consistent with the American style. I have enclosed a selection of my published articles for your review.

As follow-up to our previous conversation during your presentation at Columbia University last November, I would like to re-emphasize my interest in the possibility of working in the New York Times Tokyo bureau. Please feel free to contact me at (212) 864-3771. Ideally, I would like to begin employment this coming summer.

Thank you very much for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Yuko Shiotani