

JOB APPLICATION LETTER

Your cover letter tells an employer what position you are applying for, why you are interested in that position, and emphasizes specific talents and skills you have that would enable you to do a good job. Please remember that your resume tells the employer everything they need to know about you. The letter then needs to fully indicate your interest in the co-op employer. It can also serve to help you focus your thoughts on why you want a specific job and aid co-op faculty and the employer in understanding your abilities and your motivation for wanting the job. Make the letter specific to the job, and frame it to highlight some aspects of who you are. Questions to ask yourself include:

- What are my goals in pursuing this job?
- What makes me a good match for this organization?
- How will this employer benefit from hiring me?
- What are my strengths, skills, and talents?
- What can I gain from this co-op?

A letter should be limited to one page with three targeted paragraphs. It should be professionally presented with no errors. It should be revised, revised and revised. Don't forget to proofread and spell check. Please be cautious about how you phrase your letter. A very common pattern of using "I" to start most sentences creates an unprofessional letter. While the letter is about you and your interest in the co-op, refrain from beginning sentences with "I" whenever possible. Your letter will read much better when you follow this advice. Also, since you sign your letter, do not begin it with "Hello my name is..."

Letters should scream ability with your comments being backed up by specific references. For example you might say, "While working as a legal assistant in a small Washington, DC law office, I demonstrated my ability to work unsupervised during my frequent interviews with incarcerated clients. This co-op was challenging in other ways and especially because I had never lived in a large city before. I learned self-reliance and gained confidence in my ability to navigate in an unfamiliar place." When describing a job writing for a newsletter a student could say, "I had the chance to write what I wanted to, and learned how to reconcile my desire to be creative while also fulfilling the needs of my employer. More than anything else, I learned how to have fun while working." Another example, "My experience during high school as glass blower's assistant at the Pittsburgh Glass Center demonstrates my capability of working with others through the creative process of production while meeting the challenges presented to me."

You may depart from the format presented below, but it is important to understand the function of a cover letter as it is reflected in our outline. Here is the basic outline and how the letter should look on the page.

Date

Contact Person

Organization

Address

City and State

Dear Name:

In the first paragraph tell the person why you are writing and state what you know about the co-op. It also helps to mention to whom you have spoken about the job. Describe briefly the job as you have researched it and why it interests you. This portion should guide the employer's interpretation of your resume. Here are some examples of how you might guide their thinking about you: meet a specific need of the employer, exploring a career or an interest, using skills you already have in a new environment, observing and participating in a particular organization or setting.

Explain why you believe you could perform the job well and what contributions you could make to the organization. You should briefly state two or three top talents or skills and follow with the benefits the employer will reap from those skills. Use this paragraph as an opportunity to promote skills and experiences that are most relevant to this job. Your goal is to demonstrate that you are a worthy prospective co-op student. State specific skills and abilities. Cite specific course work. Describe previous job experiences. Describe benefits to employer when you are hired.

You can indicate how this work experience can contribute to both your short- and long-term educational goals. Include the dates you are available for full time work. These dates are a commitment. These should be the established co-op dates unless special arrangements are to be negotiated. This is your goodbye paragraph so be sure to invite the employer to contact you for a telephone interview.

Sincerely,

Signature

Your Name (four lines between sincerely and your name)

Your phone number

Your email address