

# Cover Letters

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Did you know that American journalists are trained to appeal to a sixth-grade reading level? Did you know that people have shorter attention spans than ever before? In the Student Success & Engagement Office at Lakeland College, the staff can assist you in writing an impressive cover letter so that you get noticed! Utilize this guide while creating your document and then schedule an appointment to have it reviewed!

## PURPOSE

Cover Letters were developed because they “covered” a resume and provided an introduction of the individual seeking employment. It is important that a cover letter always accompany a resume when applying for a position, so that an employer can gain more insight into the candidate.

## READABILITY

It is important when writing a cover letter that you keep things simple and to the point. You have to make an impact on the reader to obtain an interview. In general, the cover letter is the first piece of material a Human Resources Manager will review, so you have a short amount of time to make a lasting impression.

Each letter should be written specifically for a position and include the name of the company, the desired position and a contact person. Form letters will not help entice an employer to contact you, so use your time wisely. Using the same letter for multiple companies is not acceptable and easily identifiable to employers.

## PLANNING

- Create your own document – do not use a template.
- Write a letter so that it reflects you and can convey your personality.
- Use ample margins and pay close attention to your grammar, punctuation and spelling.
- Avoid the overuse of the pronoun “I.”
- Indicate that a resume is attached.
- Use the job posting to your advantage by using keywords from the description within your document, as it will catch the employer’s attention more quickly.
- Some words are critical to employers that you may consider including in your document, such as leadership skills, written and verbal communication skills, teamwork skills, problem-solving abilities, etc.
- Don’t go overboard! Avoid littering your letter with too many catchy phrases that can distract the employer and may not accurately represent your skills and experiences.

## CONTENT ORGANIZATION

- **Letterhead** Use the same letterhead that you have created for your resume and references page. Then, begin with the date and then the specific name and address of the individual you are sending the letter to. When possible, avoid salutations such as “Dear Sir” or “To Whom It May Concern.” Finally, include a professional greeting.
- **1st/Opening Paragraph** Describe the type of position you are interested in. Mention how/where you learned about the position (newspaper, listing, bulletin, name of contact, etc.). If you don’t know of a specific opening, inquire about available or anticipated openings. Demonstrate knowledge and interest in the company. Be very specific about this information to show the employer you have done your homework and researched the organization.
- **2nd Paragraph** Group similar items together in a paragraph. Write a topic sentence and then expand upon the theme. Examples include: Skills, background, experience, personal traits, philosophy or work, etc. Use action verbs and complete sentences that are brief and specific. Be positive in content, tone, word choice and expectations. Expand upon the information you stated in your resume, but do not repeat it. Reflect your personality and philosophy.
- **3rd Paragraph** Demonstrate your research of the employer/organization. Discuss the culture, environment, mission or values and share why you would be a good fit within the company. Gather information from their website, current publications or a Chamber of Commerce.
- **4th/Closing Paragraph** End with an action statement requesting a personal interview. Repeat your phone number and offer any assistance to help in a speedy process. Thank the reader for his/her time and consideration.
- **Salutation** Type your name at the bottom. You can also note that you have included additional documents in the envelope.

## PRINTING & DISTRIBUTION

- Check, double check and re-check your letter for errors – spelling, punctuation, etc. Do not rely completely on spell check. If you fail to review your document, it could automatically eliminate you as a candidate.
- Use 8 ½ x 11, good quality and lightly colored stationery (off-white, ivory, gray, stone, etc.). Do not use general copy/computer paper or flashy colors.
- Most employers prefer to accept applications electronically, but you may want to follow up with a printed copy in the mail. When submitting via e-mail, you should send it as a PDF to ensure format will stay intact.

## Cover Letters

Student Success and Engagement 920-565-1043 • [career@lakeland.edu](mailto:career@lakeland.edu)



**LAKELAND  
UNIVERSITY**

Utilize the same header as your resume and reference page.

### Musko Muskie

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Sheboygan, WI 66045  
(920) 565-1234

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January 3, 2013

Mr. Mark Jones  
Human Resources Coordinator  
Company XYZ  
501 Oaktree Rd.  
Manitowoc, WI 54221

Please note that this is a sample letter. **DO NOT COPY** the content; employers have noticed very similar cover letters from Lakeland graduates!

Dear Mr. Jones:

I have developed an interest in Company XYZ through recent employment advertisements in The Sheboygan Press and from researching your annual report. Your company appears to be an active and growing organization which provides ample opportunity in the area of sales. It is impressive to learn that your revenue has grown by 112% in only three years. I would be thrilled to join your team,

I will graduate in May from Lakeland College and look forward to utilizing my academic and internship experience in a professional sales position. Sales have been a major focus of my academic background and work experience. For instance, during my yearlong sales and marketing internship, I was able to gain exposure to inside sales, retail sales, various marketing and sales strategies, several workshops and conferences and supervision. The enclosed resume provides more specific information about my academic background and activities while in college. I have been a contributing member of my campus community and expect to bring that same commitment and energy to my place of employment after graduation.

According to my research, Company XYZ is well noted for its strong sales and development of new products. Your latest gadget was innovative and now widely utilized by manufacturers across the country. Being part of a team that is consistently trying new things and developing new ideas would be an exciting adventure and I would love to be a part of it.

I am anxious to speak with you and discuss my qualifications further. I hope that an interview can be arranged at your convenience. I will call you next week to request an appointment, or you can call me at 920-565-1234. Please let me know if you need any additional information. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Musko Muskie

Enclosed: Resume