



COVER LETTER

WORKSHOP WORKBOOK

This digital handout **complements an in-class, participatory workshop.** By actively participating in the workshop, **you will become skilled at showcasing your talents effectively to employers.**

What is a Cover Letter?

A *cover letter*, also called an application letter or letter of interest, is a letter you write to an employer and that accompanies your resume when applying for a job.

Purpose of a Cover Letter

Your cover letter is a potential employer's first impression of you and can be the most vital part of your application. A well written letter entices the employer to read your resume. A poorly constructed cover letter may doom your resume to the "No Need to Read" pile.

It is important to briefly highlight your skills, knowledge, and experience in your cover letter. These will indicate what you can contribute to the company.

An effective letter should convince the employer of at least two things:

- That you would be a good match with what they are looking for and will add value to their organization
- That you have done your research and really feel like this job and this organization are the right fit for you

Main Differences between a Cover Letter and a Resume

- Your resume is a list of your qualifications and accomplishments. Your cover letter explains how these qualification have prepared you to do the job you are applying for
- Your cover letter directly discusses your interest in the job and the company based on the research you have done, your resume does not
- Your cover letter demonstrates your command of the English language (correct grammar, punctuation); proficiency in written communication (sentence length, transition words, vocabulary); and attention to details (company name, position requirements)

Business / Cover Letter Format

Header (the same as on your resume and any other seeking documents)

**leave 2 spaces in between header and date*

Date

First & Last Name

Person's Title

Company Name

Full Address

City, Province, Postal Code

RE: Position title that you are applying to

Dear First and Last Name:

1st paragraph (Introduction)

Focus is on THEM (company & technology & job) and what they are doing that you are interested in. Research the company and based on what you have learned about them, describe WHY you are interested in the COMPANY & JOB and why you are a GOOD FIT.

2nd paragraph (Body)

Focus is on HOW YOUR SKILLS MATCH the job requirements. You must provide specific examples to prove your technical competencies. Use examples from your technical work/project experience, some of which may be on your resume.

Optional 3rd paragraph (Body)

Focus is on YOU. You may choose to describe a different set of technical skills than in the 2nd paragraph or to elaborate on transferable skills relevant to the position. You may also combine technical experience and transferable skills in any of the paragraphs of the cover letter body.

4th paragraph (Closing)

Focus is on US (you and company). Restate your interest in the company; summarize how you make a good fit with the employer's needs; and request an interview. Indicate how the employer can reach you via the SFU Co-op office. Finally, thank the employer for their time and consideration.

Sincerely,

**Insert an electronic signature if you have space*

Your full name

**2 spaces between Sincerely, and Full Name if no signature; 4 spaces if electronic signature is added*

Excercise: Writing a Powerful Introduction for Cover Letters

Below, you will find the company description that two Co-op employers provided with their job descriptions. Read the descriptions, select one and in the space provided below, write an introductory paragraph that you could use in an application cover letter.

Electronic Arts

Electronic Arts Canada (EAC) is one of the world's largest development studios for interactive entertainment. EAC develops and produces video games for all major gaming platforms and is home to some of the largest video game franchises in the world. In fiscal 2010, EA posted net revenue of \$3.7 billion and had 27 titles that sold more than one million copies.

Many EAC titles routinely sell more than 1 million units each year, including FIFA Soccer, the top selling sports video game franchise in the world with more than \$2.5 billion in lifetime revenue and 100+ million units sold to date. EAC develops games for all the leading gaming platforms, including PlayStation3, Xbox360, and Wii. EAC develops several franchises, including: FIFA Soccer, FIFA Street, Fight Night, EA SPORTS Active, NBA JAM, and NHL Hockey.

The ideal co-op is passionate about UX and evidence-based design, and driven to deliver delightful user experiences. In addition to knowledge of usability and human factors, we seek a determined and resourceful, detail-oriented team player. The UX Designer thrives in a highly collaborative, high pressure and iterative product environment.

BlackBerry

BlackBerry (NYSE: BB; TSX: BB) is a trusted security software and services company that provides enterprises and governments with the technology they need to secure the Internet of Things. Headquartered in Waterloo, Ontario, the company is unwavering in its commitment to safety, cybersecurity and data privacy, and leads in key areas such as artificial intelligence, endpoint security and management, encryption and embedded systems. You couldn't choose a more exciting time to consider joining us!

Whether you are a Co-op or Graduate, we know your first job matters, and a career at BlackBerry can take you anywhere you want to go. At Blackberry you will find that the pace is fast, the challenge exciting and the rewards are extremely satisfying. If you want to push the boundaries of mobile experience, then we want you to join the BlackBerry team.

The Web Development Student will sit in the Digital Operations team and be responsible for managing ongoing site updates to BlackBerry.com. Responsibilities include: Assist with localization of major product launches; Prepare image files for multiple sites and language variants; Assist with smaller design jobs to update pages and key images.

Body Paragraphs

What is a Body Paragraph?

The body paragraph(s) is referred to as the "heart" of your cover letter because it provides the employer an opportunity to get to know your experiences and how fit for the job.

Content:

Typically, the body paragraphs consist of 2 paragraphs and each paragraph is 4-5 sentences long.

The two body paragraphs can be:

- Two technical paragraphs
- One technical paragraph and one soft skills paragraph

Tips:

- The body paragraphs are not trophy cases where you can dump all your skills
- It's more important to highlight a few relevant key skills by describing them instead of just listing them
- You need to give the hiring manager exactly what they are looking for and you can do so by explaining how you are going to satisfy the job's specific needs
- You can find what the job's specific needs are by reviewing the job description in MyExperience

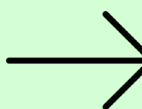
Example:

WRONG



I did very well in my web design coursework. I am proficient in HTML and CSS, and I learned about time management, collaboration, and problem solving. I also...

RIGHT



One of my accomplished projects is redesigning one of SFU's websites. I used HTML and CSS along with SFU's brand and style guides to ensure improved usability of the site. The most interesting part of this collaboration was...

Exercise: Deconstructing a Job Posting

Quickly scan the job posting below, which is similar to what you will find in our system once you have access to jobs. Using the steps outlines above and the **Deconstructing a Job Posting Worksheet** available on page 7, identify and write down how your skills and experience meets the employer's requirements.

Graphic Designer

About Us:

We are the fundraising partner of BC Cancer. Every dollar we raise stays at BC Cancer to advance research and enhance care for the people of B.C. We are a passionate staff of 70 accross British Columbia. We produce large-scale fundrasing events from our *Inspiration Gala* to the *Ride to Conquer Cancer* and we reach more than 100,000 donors through our e-communication and fundraising activity. We inspire 90,000 donors to give to the tune of \$55 million annually. The Marketing & Communications work with a highly committed and talented group of fundraisers and event professionals with a high output. Our best results emerge through highly collaborative, project-based, cross-functional work.

About You:

Are you a visual storyteller? You love bringing a concept to life in a beautiful and compelling way? You care about making a difference in the lives of people facing cancer. You thrive in creating a flawless visual. What you create at the BC Cancer Foundation will not only connect people to our cause and our brand, it will inspire people to give generously to help break down cancer and save lives.

The Position:

Reporting to the marketing manager and working closely alongside our senior graphic designer, you will be an integral member of the marketing and communications team. Partnering with team members across the organization you will be responsible for creating a wide-range of audience-focused, on-brand marketing and communications materials. You will:

- Design and develop print and digital assets for fundraising campaigns and events
- Design print, digital and social advertising creative
- Create content for social media and online channels
- Design complex large-scale environmental signage such as window and wall decals
- Translate complex health and science concepts into simple and engaging infographics or illustrations
- Assist with in-house design and production of our magazine and annual report
- Assist in the areas of photo and video editing
- Coordinate with suppliers, printers and photographers
- Ensure all materials are on-brand and align with our graphic standards

The Person & Skills:

You are a conceptual thinker with the ability to translate creative ideas and briefs into designs, illustrations and infographics. You have a keen eye for detail and may even consider yourself a perfectionist. You have exceptional technical skills in Photoshop, InDesign, Illustrator and Premiere. You work well in a collaborative, cross-functional team environment and can translate creative discussions into a concept. Your qualifications include:

- Minimum 2 years of experience in graphic design for print and web
- Fluency in Adobe Creative Suite
- Experience with production and preparing files for print
- Excellent typography, graphic design and illustration skills
- Experience working in a project-based team environment
- Experience balancing multiple projects and tight deadlines

Deconstructing a Job Posting Worksheet

REQUIRED	DESIGN OR TECHNICAL SKILLS		OTHER SKILLS	
	Employer's needs	How do you meet these criteria?	Employer's needs	How do you meet these criteria?
	a. _____	a. _____ _____	d. _____	d. _____ _____
	b. _____	b. _____ _____	e. _____	e. _____ _____
	c. _____	c. _____ _____	f. _____	f. _____ _____
NICE-TO-HAVE	DESIGN OR TECHNICAL SKILLS		OTHER SKILLS	
	Employer's needs	How do you meet these criteria?	Employer's needs	How do you meet these criteria?
	g. _____	g. _____ _____	j. _____	j. _____ _____
	h. _____	h. _____ _____	k. _____	k. _____ _____
	i. _____	i. _____ _____	l. _____	l. _____ _____

Tips and Suggestions for Cover Letter Writing

- Use the same header and font type as on your resume
- Use a professional font in a readable size, 10 - 12 point depending on the font
- Keep it to maximum one page
- Use specific examples to demonstrate your skills and strengths
- Vary your sentence structure and don't use too many "I" statements
- Don't use contractions/abbreviations (i.e. I am vs. I'm: Interactive Arts and Technology vs. IAT)
- Target each letter to each specific job and/or company
- Never send out a generic cover letter for it will not cover any of the specific qualifications. Remember, this is not just a formality; you are writing a letter to a person. If you had the opportunity to be face-to-face with the hiring manager, what would you say to explain why you want the job and why they should want you there?
- Focus on what you can do for them, not what they can do for you. You want to say enough about why you are interested in the job to convince them that you really will fit and want to be there, but your main focus should be on how you will benefit the company.
- Address your letter to a specific person whenever possible. When a name is not provided, use "Dear Hiring Manager" in the salutation, or any other acceptable alternatives.
- Be sure to use industry-specific keywords. This not only grabs the attention of the reader but if your application is being scanned using specific software, your application is more likely to be selected.
- It must be error-free! Errors in your letter make the employer think you will be careless at work, and having one error can be the only reason they need to rule you out. Always proofread carefully and have someone else double check it.
- Write professionally and intelligently, but don't overdo it. An employer will be able to tell if you are trying to write in a way that is very different than how you would ever speak.

Self-Evaluation

Personal Header & Employer Address Block	
Introduction	
Body Paragraph 1 & Body Paragraph 2	
Conclusion	

Cover Letter Checklist

Cover Letter - Format

Letterhead - unique and professional, contains contact information, and is consistent with resume and references

Font type and size are consistent with all application documents

Block format (No Indentation)

Includes the following in proper format

- Current Date
- Correct contact name and address
- Title of job applying to (RE: XXX) and employer's job number if applicable
- No honorific (Ms., Mr.) unless gender is known; instead 'First and Last Name'

Professional tone and formal style of writing (no contractions), reader-centered (benefit to employer)

Design - not text heavy, good use of white space/margins

Logical flow and easy to read - clear, concise, and well organized

Includes contact via SFU Co-op office in closing paragraph

Digital signature

Written in first person (i.e. I, we, our)

No errors in spelling, punctuation or grammar

Cover Letter - Content

Opening paragraph

- 1-2 sentences on what you value about the organization itself or their product/service
- 1-2 sentences on what you specifically bring to this job or how you match the skills requested
- Emphasis on the contribution you can make to the company, job, or project, and not what you will benefit from this job

Second and third paragraph

- Topic sentence that provides main idea for the paragraph
- Detailed example that outlines experiences, skills, and education linked to the employer's needs and job requirements
- Articulation of how transferable skills meet the requirement or will benefit the employer/positions

Closing paragraph

- Reconfirms enthusiasm for the job
- Thanks the employer
- Invites employer to contact you through the co-op office to arrange an interview

Reflection - Cover letter

What section did you do very well in, which section did you need to revise?

Other Resources

OLC Cover Letter Gallery: <https://olc.sfu.ca/gallery/cover-letter>

Workshop Evaluation

Take a moment to complete the workshop evaluation at: <http://websurvey.sfu.ca/survey/385994380>