## 1. Thoroughly read the job description



This is key to writing an effective cover letter. You must understand the ins and outs of the job description. Carefully read every section of the job description.

**Here’s the trick**: Print out the job description, or copy and paste it into a word document. Grab a highlighter and pick out the minimum qualifications, preferred qualifications, and core responsibilities.

## 2. Use keywords to elevate the overall quality

Keywords help match your qualifications to the open position. It’s important to figure out likely keywords and integrate them into your letter.

**Here’s the trick**: After you read the description, use the ‘Find’ function (i.e. Ctrl+F for Windows, or Command+F for Mac). When you release the buttons, a search box will appear. Type in likely keywords, such as “communication” or “collaborate.” Your computer will highlight every appearance of this word. Determine how the word is used and tailor your cover letter accordingly.

## 3. Customize it

You should never submit the exact same cover letter to multiple positions. Generic phrases such as “Dear employer” or “I would love to work for your company” quickly indicate a lack of care.

**Here’s the trick**: Include the name of the company, the exact position title, and something interesting about the company in your introduction. For example, “I am excited by the communication internship with XYZ company and am drawn to your mission to serve the greater Los Angeles neighborhood.”

## 4. Tell a story

Just like a good book, the first sentence of your cover letter should grab the reader’s attention. Avoid cliché phrases like, “I am writing to apply for your internship.” Or, “I’m writing in response to your recently advertised position.”

**Here’s the trick**: Write something unique, yet professional. For example: “When I was 13, I discovered my passion for animals. I am incredibly excited by your internship for zoology majors.”

## 5. Express your appreciation, without being too pushy

You will inevitably find [cover letter samples](http://www.internships.com/student/resources/search/coverletter/examples) that say: "I will call your office in a week to schedule an interview." While you want to appear assertive and confident, this is typically too pushy.

**Here’s the trick**: Try this instead: "I welcome the opportunity to speak with you about how I can contribute." You can communicate your sincere interest without being aggressive.

## 6. Keep it short and sweet

No cover letter should be longer than one page, but a 2-sentence letter is too short. Write 3-5 well-written paragraphs. Take a look at our complete [cover letter format guide](http://www.internships.com/student/resources/search/coverletter/cover-letter-format) for even more types of cover letters.

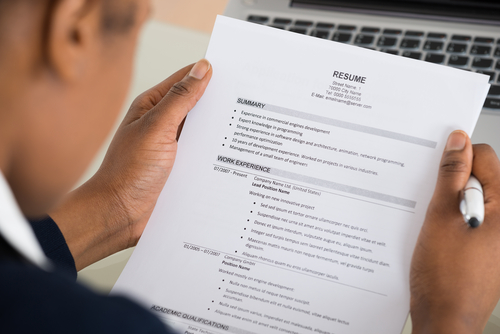
**Here’s the trick:** Read through your latest version and delete irrelevant information. While it’s awesome that you volunteer with ten different organizations, you shouldn’t include every experience. Choose the most relevant one.

## 7. Lose the formality

When you read sample cover letters, you may find some that sound like this: “Please accept this cover letter in application to your open position.” That’s a little too formal.

**Here’s the trick:** Read the entire document out loud. Read it to a [brutally honest] friend. Does it sound like you, or is it unnecessarily formal?

## 8. Don’t rewrite your resumé



Don’t waste cover letter space by simply reiterating what’s on your resumé. Expand on your resume, include a story, integrate your personality, talk about the company, and discuss your passion.

**Here’s the trick:** Compare your cover letter and resumé side-by-side. Does it look like you plagiarized your own resumé? If so, make some changes. Your cover letter should not look like you turned the contents of your resumé into complete sentences.

## 9. Express your personality

I get it. It can be tempting to Google “cover letter sample” and use a ready-made template. While there’s nothing wrong with using a template as a place to start, you need to make it yours.

**Here’s the trick:** [Download one of our cover letter templates](http://www.internships.com/student/resources/search/coverletter/examples) and use them as a starting point. Fill in the template with your information and rephrase sentences to reflect your unique voice.

## 10. Edit your cover letter

Typos will quickly eliminate you from an application pool. They indicate a lack of attention to detail, not to mention poor spelling and grammar.

**Here’s the trick:** Review your letter, read it aloud, have a friend review it, and use the text-to-speech function on your computer (i.e. listen to your computer read it out loud). This will help you find mistakes and fix them before it’s too late.

## 11. Address your letter to a specific person

Don’t use “To Whom it May Concern”. Make sure you [address a specific hiring manager](http://www.internships.com/student/resources/search/coverletter/how-to-address-a-cover-letter). Use their full name and spell it correctly.

**Here’s the trick:** Companies will often list the hiring manager on the job description. If you can’t find it, you can call Human Resources and ask. Here’s what you say, “Hi, I am applying to your open internship position #53946. Could you tell me who the hiring manager is for this position?”

## 12. Name drop

Name dropping is when you include the name of a friend, family member, or acquaintance who is connected to the company. If done correctly, this can improve your chances of securing an internship or full-time position.

**Here’s the trick:** Include something like this in your introduction: “After speaking with the director, Jackson Lee, at your recent networking event, I am incredibly excited to apply for the human resources internship with ABC Company.”

## 13. Focus on what you can do for the company

Here’s the last cover letter tip. I’m sure you’re awesome, but your letter isn’t all about you. The key to writing great cover letters is explaining what you can do for the employer. Why should they hire you?

**Here’s the trick:** Read through each section and ask: “How does this relate to the company?” If you can’t answer that question, make some changes.