**Welcome to Class!**

Hello and welcome to our lesson on cover letter writing!

During this lesson, we’re going to detail the process of writing a stellar customized cover letter. We’ll explore what a cover letter is and how it can be a powerful asset for your job hunt. Based on our personal experience and the feedback we’ve gotten from recruiters and hiring managers, we’ll explore a variety of topics and activities to help you build a customized cover letter. We’ll discuss the integral components of a cover letter and how to organize the content. Finally, we’ll discuss how to format your letter.

Cover letters give you a unique opportunity that resumes do not. A cover letter is your opportunity to communicate with the company, in your own narrative, about your skills, interests and aspirations.

Let’s begin!

## What's a Cover Letter?

First things first - let’s discuss the essence of what the cover letter is and why it’s worth your time to write a custom letter for each application.

To be considered for many jobs, you’ll be asked to submit a cover letter. Why? Recruiters like cover letters because they provide information about you that other materials can’t convey.

Your cover letter introduces your story in paragraph form and in your own voice. It explains your purpose for applying and elaborates on highlighted achievements that you mention in your resume.

**Further, your cover letter showcases your ability to effectively communicate your goals.** The customization of your cover letter not only communicates your degree of interest in the role and organization, but it also showcases that you have desirable traits like self-discipline, critical thinking and initiative.

Unlike job materials such as your resume or LinkedIn, a cover letter offers you the space to communicate your personality, persuasive skills, and knack for written communication.

**Have fun with the creative challenge and take pride in your cover letter!**

## What to Include in a Cover Letter

Now that we’ve explored the value of a cover letter and completed a personal reflection about your career path, let’s detail the integral components found in a cover letter.

A cover letter is one page, and addressed to a recruiter or individual conducting hiring. It should be succinct, captivating and made up of a few memorable paragraphs.

A blank page offers a lot of freedom, but what are the big picture topics you want to include in your cover letter?

To begin writing your letter, you first need a job to target it to. We'll go through that in the next exercise. After, you will complete three exercises to build three parts of your cover letter: the**introduction**, the **body** and the **conclusion**.

In these next exercises, it's important for you to **just write**. Forget - briefly - about formatting and spacing. Just describe your experiences. Once you get those on (digital) paper, it will be easier to edit.

Let's go!

## Formatting

Now that your have successfully created a draft of your cover letter, it is time to complete your next step - formatting your cover letter.

How you format your cover letter can vary. Depending on your job, a longer personal statement or even a video or 3-D design may replace the standard one-page cover letter. These different mediums share a common theme: they're about connecting your passion, skills and goals and voicing them in your own narrative. For the cover letter project, we will describe one common way to format your letter.

The first thing to keep in mind is visual clarity. Your goal here is to make your letter as easy as possible for a recruiter to read. We recommend using clear, professional fonts such as Verdana or Times New Roman. Keep font size between 10-12 point font.

We also recommend including space between paragraphs and single-spacing your cover letter. Use standard or one-inch margins. Note you can use smaller slightly margins as long as you are consistent on all sides.

Finally, align all paragraphs to the left of the page, or justify them.

Beyond the font and spacing of your cover letter, you’ll also want to include the following elements in your cover letter:

* Include the Date (Month, day, Year) in the upper right or left hand corner.
* Include a formal addressment in your letter. This should be to the recruiter, if the name is available. If a name is not available, writing "Dear team," or "Dear recruiting team" works too.
* Be sure to include a formal closing salutation such as “Regards, **\_** your name”.

If you decide you want to try a different font, margin, or any other formatting - go for it. Just make sure to **keep it consistent.**

## Self-Evaluation

As we mentioned initially, your cover letter is your chance to make a great first impression by highlighting your communication skills, relevant achievements, your fit, and your interest in the position.

To confirm that the parts of your cover letter amount to this impactful whole, before sending off your cover letter, be sure to address the following questions.

Ask yourself - **“Do I convey my attention to detail?”**

In other words: Are there spelling errors? Is it visually easy to read? Is the formatting standard? Are sentences clear?

Next, ask **“Do I convey my interest and alignment with the organization’s culture?”**

In other words, “Does the tone of my cover letter match the tone of the organization’s communications? Do I reference personal values that may align with those of the organization?”

How about the question, **“Do I convey my qualifications for the position through memorable achievements?”**

Or more specifically, ask “Do my experiences relate to the job I am applying for?” “Do I describe these as notable achievements, or simply task?” Make sure you describe how you use your technical skills to solve problems or develop products.

Ask yourself **“Do I convey an understanding of the position and what the organization does?”**

More specifically, “Do I reference the job title and organization name? Do I reference something distinct about the organization’s mission?”

Finally, ask **“Did I leave a good lasting impression?"** Quickly summarizing your interest in the job and ending the letter by expressing gratitude, such as a statement thanking the recruiter for their consideration, are common ways to end the letter on a good note.

Though we left you with a long list of questions to consider, be sure to ask yourself these question before sending out your letter.

If you say no to any of these, circle back to your cover letter and address areas that need improvement.