**Cover letters**

 anytime you send a resume, always include a cover letter, even if the employer doesn’t request one or says “optional”! Your cover letter is a sales pitch because it explicitly states why you want the job and why you are qualified.

**features**
- **Length:** 1 page, 4-5 paragraphs
- **Tone:** Business casual, professional, clear, direct writing style

**final checklist**
- **Proofread grammar, spelling, and content** (mistakes can wreck your chances)
- **Letter design matches resume** (header, font, layout, etc.)
- **Letter is customized for this job & employer**
- **Address the letter to a specific individual, contact HR or Spartans working there to research the best name to use**
- **Insert digital signature for tech savvy and professional polish**

## stuck getting started?

1. Try writing a letter to someone you know well - a parent, advisor, professor or teacher. Tell them about the position, and have done your research

2. Consider this from the employer’s point of view: by leveraging your skills to specific requirements in the job description, show why you are a good fit for the job

3. Take this draft and put it into a cover letter format, brush up the wording to sound more formal and professional, and organize for skimmability and polish.

## Purpose:
A compelling argument for why you should be granted an interview via what skills you have to offer

## Context:
Show that you understand the employer, the position, and have done your research

## Tone:
Business casual: professional, clear, direct writing

## Length:
Professional polish, digital signature for tech savvy

## final checklist
- **Address the letter to: A**
- **Introduction:** Tell them about the position
- **Purpose:** An argument for why you should be granted a chance to interview
- **Context:** Show that you understand the employer, the position, and have done your research
- **Tone:** Business casual: professional, clear, direct writing
- **Length:** Professional polish, digital signature

A cover letter is a sales pitch because it explicitly states why you want the job and why you are qualified.

**BODY PARAGRAPH(S)** Be specific about why you are interested in the position and show your enthusiasm. Briefly summarize some of your strongest qualifications to do the job.

**CLOSING PARAGRAPH(S)** Refer the reader to the resume (or application form) you are enclosing. Declare your interest in an interview and offer to provide further documentation upon request.

**SIGNATURE**

Avery Black

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prepare to communicate

Every time you communicate with an employer, be as professional as possible. Always use correct grammar when speaking or writing. Professional email is different from a text message or writing a friend. Even if email is your preferred way of communicating, check with your contacts to see what their preferred contact method is so you can communicate with them most effectively.

Communication essentials

**using the phone**
- Taking a cell phone call when with another person can be rude. This is especially true during an interview, site visit, career fair, or other professional event!
- In fact, be prepared to silence your phone and put it away. Texting, checking your phone for email, and otherwise being constantly distracted by your phone is likely to make you seem uninterested. It’s not going to make a good impression.
- When leaving a voice mail or message, speak slowly and clearly so your message is clear. Keep your message short. Leave your name and phone number to ensure the employer can call you back.
- Return calls the day they’re received. If for some reason you can’t call back the same day, call within 24 hours.
- Make sure that the greeting for your voice mail is professional. Employers often complain about greetings that include loud music, background noise, or are just generally unprofessional.

**thank-you letters**
- Always send a thank-you letter after an interview or other personal interaction. Show the people you met that you appreciate their time and attention. Thank-you letters can be sent via email, a handwritten note, or formal letter.
- Be sure to send the thank-you promptly—it’s best to send it within 24 hours of your meeting or exchange.
- The bottom line is that you want the note to reach them before they’ve made their decision. If they haven’t told you what their timeline is, that’s one of the things you should ask before leaving the interview!
- To avoid burning bridges that might be useful later on, you should even send a thank-you letter to an employer with whom you’ve decided not to accept a position.
- For more information on thank-you letters, see the resources available at CareerNetwork.msu.edu.

**effective email**
- Don’t use an unprofessional email address (e.g., sexykitten@hotmail.com). The recipient could delete the message. Your MSU email or a Gmail account are the best bet.
- Include a meaningful subject line that makes it clear what will be covered in the message, such as “Jose Vega—Confirming Friday Interview Time” or “MSU Food Science Junior Seeking Information.”
- Be sure to include your full name and contact information in each email.
- Remember that there is no guarantee that an email is private.
- When replying to a message, include the previous message in your response. Keeping the thread of the discussion together will help both you and your contact to follow the course of your email discussion.
- Re-read and spell-check every email before you hit “Send!” Sadly, employers say they’ve received emails from students (or recent grads) that are so casual or full of grammatical and spelling errors that they just hit “delete.” Sadder still, employers who are alumni have said these unprofessional messages hurt their Spartan pride!