

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

✓ stuck getting started?

- ▶ **Try writing a letter to someone you know well** – a parent, advisor, professor or teacher. Tell them about the position you're applying for, how you found it, why you're interested or excited, why you think you would be a good candidate, what parts of the job you're ready to take on, and what you know and like about the employer. Of all your strengths and

- ▶ **Purpose:** A compelling argument for why you should be granted an interview via what skills you have to offer
- ▶ **Content:** show that you understand the employer, the position, and have done your research

skills, what are the top 3 reasons the employer should interview you for this job?

- ▶ Take this draft and put it into cover letter form; brush up the wording to sound more formal and professional, and organize for skimability and polish.

✓ 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

1 Avery Black

231-123-4567 | averyb@msu.edu | www.linkedin.com/ablack

2 November 14, 2016

3 Dr. Esther Washington, Director of Museum Education
American Museum of DC
1000 Jefferson Dr SW
Washington, DC 20560

4 Dear Dr. Washington,

5 I am writing to express my interest in the position of Visitor Education Intern at The American Museum of DC. Your reputation internationally is what attracted me to the position listed on AAMC.org internship page. I believe my education, experience, and interests make me a strong intern candidate for your team.

Education: As a Psychology major (with minors in Spanish and Education) at Michigan State University, my coursework has prepared me to interact and communicate effectively with museum visitors from diverse backgrounds. I have grown my research, writing, speaking, and teamwork skills through my course assignments and presentations. I have also managed my time with a heavy course load and multiple deadlines while maintaining a 3.91 GPA. I've completed work for diverse professors which has prepared me to work effectively with the intern supervisors at the Museum and exceed their expectations. With this background, I believe I can get up to speed and contribute successfully to the Visitor Education program this summer.

Experience: As a Community Outreach intern with the NorthWest initiative, I developed a strong track record of outreach, event logistics, and program assessment. I learned to interact with families, children with special needs, and people from diverse backgrounds with my undergraduate research project, home care jobs, and working with orphans in Ecuador. I developed a detail orientation and active listening skills working with the FACES research project, while at the Michigan House of representatives. I learned to communicate in a professional setting with diplomacy on a variety of topics. Further, my 2 years of Spanish and volunteer work in Ecuador have helped me understand a global perspective for coworkers, supervisors, and visitors. I believe all of these skills would translate to strong intern performance at the museum.

Interest: I'm very interested in the intersection of human communication, learning, and culture. Helping visitors access information and artifacts around our shared cultural heritage would be an outstanding opportunity for me to work and grow. I was especially attracted to your new exhibit, The Cultures and Calendars of the Americas which blends many elements of my professional interests. In addition, your reputation as an innovative collections-holding institution (especially the way you take an interactive approach to the visitor education experience) would be an exciting program to learn from and experience as an emerging professional. The American Museum visitor intern program would be a perfect place for me to build upon what I've done in the past and I'm thrilled to be considered.

7 In summary, with outstanding preparation and experience, I would love to discuss the position with you further. I'm excited about the prospect of working as an intern with the American Museum and I look forward to hearing from you soon. Thank you for your time and consideration.

8 Sincerely,

9 *Avery Black*

Avery Black

6 **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 work. Consider this from the employer's point of view by linking your skills to specific requirements in the job description. Show what you have to offer the employer; don't just daydream about what the employer can offer you.

7 **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.

8 **SIGNATURE.**

9 **YOUR NAME (typed).**

✓ parts of a cover letter

- 1 **YOUR NAME, DIGITAL ADDRESS, PHONE NUMBER, and EMAIL ADDRESS.** Can be formatted in standard business letter format or as it appears on your resume.
- 2 **DATE.**
- 3 **CONTACT.** Use an individual's name, whenever possible.
- 4 **SALUTATION.**
- 5 **FIRST PARAGRAPH.** State the reason you are writing, explain the type of work you are interested in, or the specific position you are applying for, and indicate how you learned about the employer and/or the opening.

1 Taylor Levine

www.linkedin.com/TaylorLevine | 248.987.6543 | taylor.levine@gmail.com

2 May 4, 2016

3 Ignatius Sullivan
Executive Director, Michigan Chapter
Crohn's & Colitis Foundation of America
24738 Orchard Hills Rd. Ste 700
Detroit, MI 48201

4 Dear Mr. Sullivan,

5 I'm writing regarding the Talk Steps Walk Coordinator position located in Detroit, MI. As an English major, I am attracted to a career where I can use my strong communication skills to directly help people. This position would allow me to coordinate with many people in order to plan successful Walks, supporting the CCFA's goal of improving Crohn's & Colitis patients' lives through research. Being very familiar with your organization personally and in networking with the Gastrointestinal Student Group that I lead at Michigan State University, I was excited to see the listing for this position on idealist.org.

6 This opportunity would be an excellent fit for both my personality and skills. As reflected on my resume, in my recent internship at NorthWest Initiative, I had the opportunity to plan a neighborhood conference from the group up, which involved honing many important event-planning skills such as those you are seeking in a Walk Manager: developing a promotional plan to publicize the event, working within budgets and timelines, mobilizing local business leaders and residents to volunteer their time and money, and maintaining current databases to track and record the progress of the event. I learned first-hand many challenges that nonprofits face, and also how vital meaningful relationships with individuals and other groups are to making and organization sustainable.

Of particular relevance to CCFA, I also currently serve as the Social Chair of the MSU GISI (Gastrointestinal Student Initiative) where I plan regular social and educational meetings for student with Crohn's and Colitis. As with the Walk Manager position, this role requires heavy reliance on networking among and outside of the group. When we participated in the Take Steps Walk at Camp Dearborn last year, I was Team Captain for MSU CISI, and I am looking forward to the event again this year.

7 Thank you for your time and attention to my application. I look forward to scheduling an interview with you to discuss the position, as well as my qualifications and commitment to your cause. An opportunity to contribute to an organization whose mission I already support would be an excellent next step in my career path.

8 Sincerely,

9 *Taylor Levine*

Taylor Levine

✓ 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 hand-written 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!