

COVER LETTER INFORMATION & CONSTRUCTION TIPS

www.citadel.edu/career_services/CoverLetterSamples.htm
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The Citadel
THE MILITARY COLLEGE OF SOUTH CAROLINA
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Below you will find **General Cover Letter Information**, along with **Construction Tips** to use with a variety of other resources and information as you construct *your letter*. Obtain as many ideas as possible for *your letter* by referring to several samples. Keep in mind that the final version that may work best will differ from the samples you view. For example, you will likely have additional experiences that you bring to the table or there may be different responsibilities to address within the letter.

WHAT IS A COVER LETTER?

While a resume is your personal marketing piece for a job search, a Cover Letter introduces you to an employer and quickly explains why you are sending a resume. For a professional look, use the same heading from your resume on your cover letter. When mailing or providing application material in person, use the same resume quality paper for both.

Cover letters are generally not requested in the write-up of an advertised position, but they are expected as part of professional job searching etiquette. Their use also helps you to stand out as a candidate. When applying for graduate schools, you may wish to include a cover letter and a resume in addition to the application materials that are required in order to stand out as an applicant. Adjust the cover letter format and samples to fit your needs.

COVER LETTER CONTENT/FORMAT:

- The first paragraph states why you are writing, what job you are applying for and where/how you learned about the opening. This can be done in 2-3 sentences.
- The second and third (if needed) paragraphs tell the employer what you can do for the company based on your experience and skills. Briefly refer to your resume here, but go into further depth about the story your resume begins to tell.
- The final paragraph wraps up the letter by stating your interest in the position, requesting an interview and offering when you will follow-up, as well as restating your phone number for the employer to reach you.
- Adjust each cover letter you write to fit the specific position and company. Save your cover letters for reference during your search, as well as for assistance in writing future letters. Keep hard copies in your Career Planning Portfolio (www.citadel.edu/career_services/Students/Fall08/ CPP/ CPP_Packet.doc).

WHEN TO SEND A COVER LETTER:

Applying for Positions through The Citadel Career Center Gate (The Gate)

Within The Citadel Career Center Gate, when you elect to forward your resume in response to a posted position on the Job Board, you will have the option of pasting a Cover Letter into a supplied box. It is important to refer to the job posting to see if an employer requests a cover letter. If a cover letter is not requested, it is still appropriate for you to include one. Please Note: The cover letter cannot be formatted.

However, when you elect to forward your resume in response to a position posted for an On-Campus Interview, the option of pasting a Cover Letter will not be available. Keep in mind that an employer may still request one of you. For example, when you are selected to schedule an interview time, the employer may ask you to email him/her a cover letter. If it is not requested that you send one, to stand out as a candidate you may wish to confirm your interest by sending a cover letter in response to your invitation to schedule a time.

Develop a general cover letter and revise it for each specific position you apply for within The Gate (and outside of the system). Save each of these versions for future reference, keeping copies on your hard drive, an external source, and hard copy. When copying and pasting your cover letter into the supplied box for The Gate, be sure that you have selected the correct version and have already proofread it for grammar, spelling, and content.

Applying for Positions through Other Sources

- Send a cover letter, along with a copy of your resume, when you are contacting an employer to learn about possible openings within the company. (Be sure to have researched the company and have looked for posted job opportunities on their website or a job line by phone before sending a "cold" introduction cover letter).
- When applying for jobs online, if possible, include a cover letter. Usually, this is only possible if the company asks for you to send your resume as an email attachment. In such a case, you should also send your cover letter as an email attachment. If you are asked to cut and paste your resume onto the company's form, then you will likely not be able to include a cover letter. HOWEVER, go the extra mile and mail a cover letter, along with a copy of your resume, to the company and indicate in the cover letter that you completed the online application. Or if you are contacted by email soon after applying online and are provided an appropriate email address, reply and include a cover letter and another copy of your resume as attachments (or combine into one attachment).
- Send a cover letter, along with a copy of your resume, to an alumnus when you request his/her advice on your job search. In the cover letter, introduce yourself, indicate what your career goals are, and restate your contact information so that the alumnus may assist you in the best way possible.
- Send a cover letter, when applying for summer internships or jobs related to your major. For some seasonal positions, a cover letter and a resume will not be necessary, but could make the difference between your candidacy and everyone else who simply completed the application.

COVER LETTER TIPS:

- Always send an original cover letter WITH your resume on matching stationery.
- Always find out a name to address it to, AVOID "Dear Sir or Madam."
- Use a "you" centered approach, show what you can offer the employer rather than ask what the employer can do for you.
- Be careful NOT to use too many "I" sentence openers.
- Use specific examples and details about your background and experience.
- Elaborate on information presented in your resume, DO NOT repeat it.
- Use the company's name rather than saying "your company."
- DO NOT volunteer negative information about yourself.
- Write an ORIGINAL cover letter, DO NOT just copy someone else's!
- RUN A SPELL CHECK.
- REMEMBER to sign the letter in ink.
- Avoid the phrase "I feel" and replace it with "I am confident, or I believe."

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

Additional information regarding cover letter writing may be found in Martin Yate's book entitled: Cover Letters That Knock 'Em Dead. A copy is available for review in the Career Center. www.knockemdead.com.