

SAN DIEGO MESA COLLEGE

Career Services

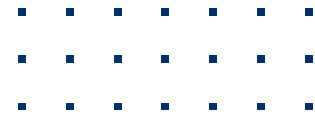


COVER LETTER HANDBOOK

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What Is a Cover Letter?



1 Purpose

A cover letter is a one-page document that introduces you to an employer. It explains your interest in a specific position, highlights relevant experience, and gives you an opportunity to demonstrate your writing skills.

2 Connection

Connect your education, skills, and professional experiences to the employer's needs. Use specific examples to show why you would be a strong candidate for the position.

3 Complement

A résumé shows what you have done. A cover letter explains why those experiences matter for this opportunity. It should expand on your résumé, not repeat it word for word.

4 When It Is Used

A cover letter may be required or optional as part of an application. It is especially useful when you want to introduce yourself, explain your interest in the position, or provide information that may not be immediately clear from your résumé.

Cover Letter Checklist



Did you follow a standard business format?

The cover letter should be neat, concise, well-organized, and almost always fit on one page. Use simple, easy-to-read fonts. Print your cover letter on white or off-white colored paper that matches your resume paper.



Have you proofread your cover letter and asked others to as well?

Ensure that your letter is free of spelling errors, grammatical mistakes, poor organization, and inappropriate language. Your letter is a direct reflection of the quality and professionalism of your work.



Have you highlighted your strengths and what you have to offer?

List relevant skills, talents and accomplishments from recent jobs. If you have relevant volunteer or internship experience, mention it in your cover letter.



Were you direct and to the point?

State your intentions and qualifications right up front. Don't assume an employer knows why you are sending your résumé.



Have you personalized your letter to the company?

Show that you have researched the company by mentioning specific details, such as a department, recent project, or acquisition. Most importantly, explain how your skills and experience relate to the position and how you can contribute to the organization.



Are you sure you have not included any negative information?

Never include personality conflicts with previous employers or sarcastic remarks in your cover letter. Bad-mouthing any place of employment reflects poorly on your character.

Cover Letter: Do's and Don'ts



Do

ADDRESS THE RIGHT PERSON

Use the hiring manager's name and professional title when available.

FOLLOW INSTRUCTIONS

Include all information or documents requested in the application.

USE KEYWORDS

Naturally include important terms from the job description.

EXPLAIN IMPORTANT CONTEXT

Briefly clarify a career change, employment gap, or relocation when necessary.

Don't

CASUAL GREETINGS

Do not use greetings such as "Hey" or "Hi there."

USE CLICHÉS AND SLANG

Avoid vague expressions, abbreviations, and overly informal language.

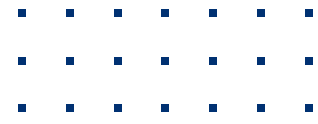
EXAGGERATE

Do not invent experiences, skills, accomplishments, or credentials.

GIVE OUT PRIVATE INFORMATION

Do not include your age, marital status, photograph, or Social Security Number.

Using AI Responsibly



Use It to Assist

- Start with your own experiences and qualifications.
- Brainstorm ideas and organize your letter.
- Identify relevant skills and job keywords.
- Improve clarity, grammar, and spelling.

Review & Personalize

- Review all AI-generated content.
- Rewrite suggestions in your own words.
- Include specific examples of your experience.
- Connect your skills to the position.
- Keep the tone natural and true to your voice.

Protect & Verify

- Avoid sharing sensitive or confidential information.
- Verify names, job titles, and organization details.
- Check all claims for accuracy before submitting.

Remember: You are responsible for the honesty, accuracy, and quality of your final cover letter.

Cover Letter: Content

Use this outline as a guide. Feel free to adapt it to your style and experience.

Address the cover letter to a specific individual whenever possible.

Your Name

Address, City, State Zip
Phone Number | Email Address
Website

Make your name stand out by increasing the font size and/or using capitalization. Include website if professional.

Date of Letter

Contact Name
Contact Title
Company Name
Street Address/City, State Zip

Other salutations to use when you do not have the name of a contact are:

- To Whom It May Concern:
- Dear Hiring Manager:
- Dear Selection Committee:

Dear (Contact Name):

PARAGRAPH #1: THE PURPOSE

The first paragraph tells why you're contacting the person. Include: 1) the **name of the job** for which you are applying; 2) **how you learned about the position**; 3) the name of the person (if any) who **referred you to the organization** and opening, preferably a colleague of the contact person; 4) a **brief sentence about who you are**; and 5) a statement to **indicate your knowledge of their company**. Your goal is to demonstrate that you are an excellent candidate and to entice them to read further.

PARAGRAPH #2 and Optional #3: ABOUT YOU

The second and optional third paragraphs make up the critical content section. You should tell more about yourself, especially **why you're what they're looking for**, by emphasizing **skills or abilities you have that relate to the job for which you are applying**. Be sure to **communicate confidence**! If you have had relevant work experience or related education, be sure to point it out with specific examples, but do not reiterate your entire resume. You may also **clarify anything unclear on your resume** in this section.

LAST PARAGRAPH: APPRECIATION & FURTHER CONTACT

The last paragraph is your **goodbye**. You may refer the reader to your enclosed resume and whatever media you are using to illustrate your training, interests, and experience. You thank the reader for his or her time; then you push for an interview. Assert yourself by telling the contact person you will call him/her on a designated date or within a specified time period to set up a meeting. Alternatively, state that you are available for an in-person interview at his/her convenience.

Sincerely,

Your Signature
Your name typed

The last paragraph is the shortest paragraph. It can be as simple as: "Thank you for your consideration. I look forward to hearing from you."

Cover Letter: Example

First Name Last Name

City, State Zip | example@example.com | (555) 555-5555

August 10, 2026

Housing, Dining and Hospitality
University of California San Diego
9500 Gilman Drive
La Jolla, CA 92093

Dear Hiring Committee:

I am writing to apply for the Catering Operations Administrative Assistant position with Housing, Dining and Hospitality at UC San Diego. I am a student at San Diego Mesa College, where I have developed strong communication, organization, and customer service skills through my education and campus employment. I would be excited to use these skills to support your catering team.

As a Student Assistant in the Student Services Office at San Diego Mesa College, I assist visitors, schedule appointments, organize documents, and support campus events. This experience has taught me to manage changing priorities and communicate clearly. I am also comfortable using Microsoft Word, Excel, and Outlook.

I am interested in working at UC San Diego because of its commitment to service and its campus community. I would welcome the opportunity to help coordinate catering events and ensure requests are handled accurately and professionally.

Thank you for considering my application. I would welcome the opportunity to discuss how my experience could contribute to your team. I can be reached at (555) 555-5555 or example@example.com.

Sincerely,

First Name Last Name

Cover Letter: Example

First Name Last Name

City, State Zip | example@example.com | (555) 555-5555

June 5, 2026

Public Affairs Department
San Diego County Water Authority
4677 Overland Avenue
San Diego, CA 92123

Dear Hiring Committee:

I am writing to express my interest in the Public Affairs Intern position with the San Diego County Water Authority. I am currently a full-time student at San Diego Mesa College studying biology, and I am interested in helping share information about water resources, conservation, and environmental issues with the San Diego community.

Through my classes and my work as a Student Assistant in the Outreach Office at San Diego Mesa College, I have developed research, writing, organization, and communication skills. In this role, I assist students and visitors, create outreach materials, support events, and complete administrative tasks. I am also comfortable using Microsoft Word, Excel, PowerPoint, Canva, and social media platforms. These experiences have prepared me to research information, create content, and communicate with different audiences.

I would value the opportunity to contribute my skills while learning more about public affairs and regional water issues. Thank you for your time and consideration. I would welcome the opportunity to discuss my qualifications and can be reached at (555) 555-5555 or example@example.com.

Sincerely,
First Name Last Name



SCAN HERE
For More
Cover Letter
Examples

<https://bit.ly/CLexamples>

SAN DIEGO MESA COLLEGE

Career Services

Connect with Career Services

Contact Us

Location: Career Center 14-306 – Student Services Building, 3rd floor

Phone: (619) 388-2777

Email: mesacareer@sdccd.edu

bit.ly/SDMesaCareer

[@sdmesacareerservices](#)

Schedule an Appointment

PREFERRED



Handshake

Book your appointment
online at
bit.ly/SDMesaHandshake



Phone or Email

Contact us to request
an appointment.



Walk In

Visit Career Services
during office hours.