

Cover Letter Basics

**There are TWO types of letters to write when job hunting.
Before you start writing, you MUST determine the purpose of the letter.**

NETWORKING LETTER: This is an introductory letter sent alone (i.e. without a résumé) to ask for expertise, advice, opinion or information. The purpose of the letter is to make initial contact before you make a phone call or personal visit. The information you get will help you market yourself when there is a job opening. Unless you know there's a specific job opening, always send a networking letter first. If this sounds like the type of letter you want to write, this is NOT a cover letter. Instead, please reference our NETWORKING handouts!

COVER LETTER: This letter is used ONLY when you know there is a **specific job or internship opening**. The purpose of the letter is to express interest in the position and give three to four reasons why you should be considered.

Follow the outline below to create a cover letter.

MOST IMPORTANTLY – ALWAYS REMEMBER YOUR AUDIENCE.

FIRST PARAGRAPH:

- Opening Line – Catches the reader's attention with a REFERENCE or an ACCOMPLISHMENT STATEMENT.
- Purpose – Give purpose for writing and mention the specific position you're applying for
- Transition – Prepare reader for next paragraph

As lifestyle editor of The Daily Orange, I'm familiar with the frenetic pace of the newspaper business (accomplishment statement). I truly enjoy this high pressure environment (purpose) and am interested in applying for the reporter position (position) at the New Times. My familiarity with the daily operations of a newspaper combined with my writing skills makes me an excellent candidate (Transition).

SECOND PARAGRAPH:

- Cite your experience to demonstrate three qualities that you possess that were **listed in the job description**. Use a sentence or two for each example.
- Always ask yourself "**How will this benefit the company?**" rather than how you would enjoy or benefit from the position.

I meet daily deadlines at The DO (I have yet to miss one!) and am comfortable with the stress and high pressure of the industry. My writing skills recently won me the "NYS's Most Promising Newswriter" honor this past winter. Having to oversee a staff of 11 writers has made me a proven team player and my "whatever it takes" attitude has helped me to be successful working alone or with the team. This combination of skill and attitude make me ideal for...

LAST PARAGRAPH:

- The Ask – What do you want to happen?
- The Action – What are you going to do about it? (It's always the same idea – "I will contact you," unless the company states you should not reach out OR **if you are a student in the SULA semester. Students in the SULA Semester program usually do not have an option to follow up with a phone call when applying for an internship. See the SULA Semester version below.**)

Thank you for your consideration. I would like to speak with you about my qualifications (the ask) and will call you in the next few days to see when an interview can be arranged (the action).

SULA Semester version: *Thank you for your consideration. I would like to speak with you about my qualifications (the ask) by phone or Skype. I will be in Los Angeles and available for an in-person interview any time after [date]."*

