

THE COVER LETTER

The cover letter should be a simple, straightforward letter, stating the position you're applying for and discussing the skills and interests that you will bring to the position. The cover let can be difficult to write; however, if you think of it in sections, it may become a little easier.

600 S. Locust [Your address]

Greencastle, IN 46135

February 2, 2008 [Date]

Ms. Kelly Smith [Inside Address]

Marketing Director

HCCH Industries

101 W. Jones Street

Chicago, IL 60606

[Salutation (if you don't know the address's)]

Dear Ms. Smith:

[gender, use the full name)]

Clearly explain what you're applying for in the first paragraph

I am writing to inquire about a January internship in marketing and promotions. DePauw's Winter Term Program allows students to spend a month off campus as full-time, unpaid interns. An internship with your HCCH would help me learn more about the field, and I could offer you some enthusiasm and a willingness to work.

At DePauw, I have been active with several campus publications and served as an advertising representative for the student radio station. The combination of writing, creative design and promotional work appeals to me, and has made me interested in pursuing a career in marketing and promotions. Along with courses in English, I have begun taking courses in economics and management, and I am hoping an internship will give me further direction in developing the skills I need.

Relate your interests to the position you're applying for

I look forward to hearing from you. I will call your office early next week to answer any questions you may have, and I can be reached at (765) 658-0000.

Thank you for your consideration.

Give clear information about when you will call and when you can be reached

Sincerely,

Sally Smith

Encl: Resume, Information for Hosts

Give clear info about when you will call, where and when you can be reached

ELEMENTS OF A COVER LETTER

First Paragraph

The first sentence should clearly state why you are writing. If you are applying for a job, state what job you are applying for and where and when it was advertised. If you are applying for a winter term internship, explain what a winter term internship is and what you'd like to get out of it. Your first paragraph should end with a persuasive statement about why you are qualified for the internship or position and how you might help the organization/company during the internship. This statement will serve as the thesis for the second paragraph, which will substantiate your skills and interests. Try to avoid overwriting this sentence or becoming over anxious about it.

Second Paragraph

Now you need to support the claims you have made about being right for the job. This section works closely with the resume, particularly the work experience and activities sections. You shouldn't recite your experience over again; rather, you should argue that your experience, interests and skills fit the employer or sponsor's needs. The more you know about the job or internship, the more easily this paragraph will be to write. For instance, if you are applying for an internship with a physical therapist, you might draw upon your experience teaching swimming to young children: "I am particularly interested in working with children. I enjoyed teaching swimming to children, and would like to see how physical therapists deal with the special problems child patients present." In some cases, the second paragraph will expand to a third paragraph, but if you are finding it hard to end this section, you should double check to make sure you not repeating your whole resume.

Third Paragraph

You may say that you are looking forward to an interview, and give dates when you are available and when and how you can be reached. Thank the reader for their time and interest. Try to give the employer or sponsor definite times when you can be reached at a particular phone number; then be available. Especially on internship requests, it's a good idea to call the sponsor. But let him or her know you will be calling and do so in a way that does not demand decisions.

FOUR TIPS

#Don't Overwrite

A cover letter is regularly regarded as a writing sample. In general, employers look for the same qualities they look for in their everyday writing. This does not mean you need to write like a lawyer if applying to a law firm. But since most lawyers spend a great deal of time wrestling with ambiguous, overly qualified prose, they appreciate direct, clear writing that makes and supports definite assertions. Engineers work a great deal with technical specifications. They like to see a well laid out resume and a cover letter that

uses language efficiently and precisely. No one is particularly appreciative of verbal excess. Keep it simple and direct.

#Not Too Much Hype

Don't overstate or exaggerate your qualifications.

#Proofread

It needs to be perfect in terms of grammar, punctuation, spelling, etc. Our best advice is to have other people read your resume and cover letter carefully.

#Focus on Education, Skills and Interests

Most of you won't have experience that "qualifies" you for a job. Rather, your qualifications will lie in your education, skills and interests. Employers will be willing to invest in on-the-job training, but they want to be sure that you read, write and think well; that you communicate with others effectively; that you learn new things easily; that you show leadership, responsibility and initiative. Your resume and cover letter can suggest or demonstrate these qualities in many subtle ways.