

Cover Letters

Purpose:

To highlight the most relevant aspects of your experience while introducing your application/resume.

Great resumes may never be read if the cover letter is sub-par. Your cover letter should provide a “hook”, or something that will make the reader want to learn more about you and your skills/experience. A cover letter is also the first “writing sample” that an employer will see from you; make sure to send in your best work.

Getting Started:

Before you sit down to write your cover letter:

- Research the job and organization before writing.
- Identify the key elements of the job - know what skills, knowledge, and personal qualities are needed for the position.
- Identify your most relevant skills and competencies.
- Know how to illustrate your skills by selecting experiences to write about that provide evidence of your ability to perform key elements of the job.
- Research the culture of the organization.

Writing the letter:

- Tailor the letter to each individual position and employer. This demonstrates that you have done your research, and also tells the employer that you are truly interested in them.
- Write the letter in your voice - writing that sounds like it came from a book, or writing in the same voice as every other student is boring.
- Address the letter to a person, preferably the person in charge of hiring for the position. Spell names correctly!
- Center your letter on the page.
- Keep your letter concise - only one page! Be clear and avoid using flowery overly-boastful language.
- Complement your resume with your cover letter; don't just repeat information.
- NEVER be negative. Don't apologize for not yet possessing a skill they would like to see. Negativity in any form is not acceptable!
- Proofread, proofread, proofread!!! Typos can signal a lack of attention to detail.
- Visit the Career Development Center for a cover letter critique.

Basic Information:

- Use bonded 8.5x11 paper - the same paper as your resume. Match envelopes.
- Font: 10 to 12 point in size using a standard font (Times Roman, Garamond, Veranda, Helvetica, Arial, etc.)
- Spacing: Text centered on a page. Margins can be 1" all around
- Heading: Use business letter format, OR, for your information, paste the same header as used on your resume to “brand” your documents.

How not to get an interview:

- Using a template into which you cut and paste incorrect employer names/information.
- Writing too much irrelevant information; listing ALL of your experiences and skills without giving any thought to tying your experiences to the position.
- Indicating how the employer/position can be of benefit to YOU, rather than how you can be an asset to THEM.
- Not proofreading - typos.

Brown Career Development Center

Paragraph One:

Name the specific position for which you are applying.

Indicate how you learned of said position (i.e. Brown Career Connection, a contact person within their organization, the newspaper, the organization's own website, etc.)

State why you're interested in the position and the employer. Note: Make this personal! Recruiters don't want to read their taglines from the organization's website written back to them.

(position: Research Assistant)

While reviewing the Harvard University Psychology department website I came across your research on the psychological effects of poverty and inequality, and your Research Assistant position within this study. I was immediately drawn to your topics of interest as well as the specific articles that you have recently published. As a Psychology concentrator focusing on this specific area, I am truly interested in the project. I would love to have an opportunity to meet with you to discuss this position.

Paragraph Two and potentially Three:

Indicate WHY you are a good fit for the organization and position (your research will come in handy here!) What skills and competencies do you possess that will be of benefit to them?

Illustrate how your academic background and experiences have provided you with the skills the employer wants.

Provide "evidence" of your skills through writing about specific experiences (summer positions, volunteer work, internships, campus leadership, activities, etc.)

(position - entry level advertising in fashion design)

Last summer I had the opportunity to acquire some practical experience through an internship at the design and advertising departments of (Designer Name) in New York, in which I took the initiative of pursuing my own research of the market, seeking trends and materials (patterns, fabrics), that proved to be successful since my ideas were later integrated in the designers' work.

Being fluent in two languages and having spent extensive time traveling has allowed me to gain a greater understanding of the vast diversity of cultures and preferences that one might face in advertising and fashion. In addition to my coursework at Brown, I have taken a two year course in 'Business and Administration' in the International Baccalaureate program abroad which enhanced my knowledge of business practices, such as market research, statistics, promotion, and public relations. The world around me is inspiring and I am eager to be challenged to find ways to incorporate some of my inspiration to this position.

Final Paragraph/Wrap up/Closing:

Reiterate your interest in the organization and position.

Indicate that you are available to discuss your qualifications in a personal interview. Let them know you will provide additional information as needed.

Repeat your phone number and email address; if you have listed more than one number in your header, write the BEST number to reach you at.

Close with a positive statement which indicates that you would appreciate hearing from the employer.

(position: Investment Banking)

I believe that I could prove to be an asset to (Company Name) and would appreciate an opportunity to discuss my qualifications with you in an interview. Please contact me at 401-555-1212 (cell) or student@brown.edu if you have any questions. Thank you for your consideration, and I look forward to hearing from you.

Matching your Skills and Experience to a Position:

Membership Coordinator, CTCNet

The main goal of the Membership Coordinator is to ensure that CTCNet members receive the highest quality customer service. The Coordinator reports directly to CTCNet's Director of Programs and works as part of a team with the Member Services Manager and Committee. Duties include:

- Communication and coordination with members on services.
- Support services to members and CTCNet staff
- Manage and Coordinate: Membership processing for new and renewal members, Membership collateral material and new member packets, Creation and dissemination of quarterly CTCNet newsletter, the Annual Awards event.

Skills to focus on in this cover letter:

Communication - your written and verbal skills honed through various means.

Teamwork - Demonstrated through writing about group projects, or your participation in extracurricular activities including sports.

Management - Focus on your leadership abilities and experiences.

Student Name

Box 2222 Brown University, Providence, RI 02918 (555) 555-1111

September 1, 2006

Ms. Jane Doe, Assistant Director
Community Center
555 Community Center Way
New York, NY 10002

Dear Ms. Doe:

I am writing to apply as a Group Leader for the Arts at Community Center. I learned about the opening through the website idealist.org; this site has been a great resource for me, because I am looking for a career where I can channel my time, energy, skills and talent into community building and social change. I believe that we need to complement our words and ideologies with actions, and much of what I have learned over the years has been through working and acting with people outside of the academic setting. Community Center embodies much of what I am hoping to accomplish, as I am especially inspired by youth, especially youth who because of less access and fewer resources, have often had to find other outlets for their struggles. I want to work at Community Center's youth program to envision with our future generations, a world that we want to live in. I believe there is no better way to begin imagining and creating than through the arts.

As an Ethnic Studies concentrator at Brown University, I studied the often unspoken histories of immigrants in this country, and learned to understand the social conditions that create inequalities, and how to bridge the gap between marginalized communities and academia. Throughout my college career, I have been heavily involved with a community center on campus, the Third World Center, serving various roles such as counselor and staff member. My experience counseling minority students about academic and personal issues and my expertise in designing/coordinating programs (such as Multiracial Heritage Week and Puerto Rican Cultural Week) both contributed greatly to my sense of how to create safe loving spaces - spaces that considered the holistic well-being of the people that came in and out. I have spent these last years honing and cultivating skills in community organizing, and intertwined with that goal, inspiring change and self-reflection through the arts. I believe that the arts, in whichever mediums we choose to explore and combine, are a way for all of us to process our lives and provoke and touch others.

My familiarity with the lower Manhattan area, through different summers working at the Museum of Chinese in the Americas in Chinatown (MOCA) and at the National Mobilization Against Sweatshops: The Lower Eastside Worker's Center, would also be helpful to Community Center. While working at MOCA, the research I undertook enabled me to view the stories of different families in this area in a cultural, social and historical context. I also worked with summer camp and daycare groups who came to visit MOCA, explaining the history of Chinese immigration and our choices in the artistic presentation of this history. At the Lower East Side's Worker Center, much of my focus was addressing many of the hardships people in the area faced, particularly post 9/11. I feel connected to the people who live in this area and attribute much of this to being able to communicate in both Spanish and Chinese.

I am interested in discussing the position of Group Leader for the Arts or other possibilities within Community Center. I can best be reached at my cell phone, (555) 555-1111 or by email at student@brown.edu. I am available to come into New York for interviews at a time convenient for you. I look forward to hearing from you!

Sincerely,

Ima Student

Ima Student

Brown Career Development Center

Student Name
Brown University, PO Box 4444
Providence, RI 02912
401.555.1212

December 1, 2006

Ms. Jane Doe
Lehman Brothers
745 Seventh Avenue
New York, NY, 10019

Dear Ms. Doe,

I am interested in applying to Lehman Brother's Investment Banking Summer Analyst Program for the summer of 2007. I was informed about this program by your e-mail to the Brown Investment Group, of which I'm a member, and by Brown's Career Development Center. I'm very interested in your program due to Lehman's capacity to bring the major investors and investment opportunities offered in global markets together. On the Fixed Income side, I'm eager to explore your "FX Structured Product Group" and the opportunities that are offered through sophisticated currency and interest rate derivative products, especially since I believe the weight of these products will be further increasing in the global markets in the coming years. On the Investment Bank side, demonstrated by the list of the firm's recent transactions, I'm excited to observe that Lehman is using its leading global position to carry out major transactions all over the world, especially in Europe.

Through a liberal education in Brown University where I'm majoring in Applied Mathematics and Economics, I've been exposed to the use and methods of mathematical thinking and problem solving in the global financial markets. I have gained insight about the dynamics and the complexity of its structure, the versatile investment opportunities that can be created (especially by derivative assets) and the workings of international economic relations. I also have a substantial amount of experience through several internships: in TSKB, the prominent development bank of Turkey, which exposed me to an emerging capital market; in Pfizer Inc., where I observed the firm culture of a multi-national corporation and learned about skills in marketing; and in Eczacibasi Holding, one of the largest group of companies in Turkey with operations in various sectors, where I evaluated the impact of budgetary and financial planning on the decision making of the upper management.

After participating as a delegate representing Turkey in the European Youth Parliament (EYP), I served as the chairman of different EYP Committees in various sessions for three years. I led a productive teambuilding session (at the end of which, 15 individuals with different nationalities and mother tongues were to become familiar and in coordination with each other) and an efficient committee discussion (where I enjoyed the fruits of a successfully built, diverse team) where members could focus their thinking towards the general issues of the European Union, discuss and come to a consensus.

I have firm belief that I can be productive in your Summer Analyst Program. Although I will be spending the holiday back in Istanbul, Turkey, you can always reach me by my email address student@brown.edu. In January, I will be back in the United States and will also be available at my mobile phone: 401.555.1212. Thank you for your consideration, and I hope we will have the chance to meet each other in the near future.

Best Regards,

Student Name

Student Name

BE 9/07