

Cover Letter Guide for Careers Beyond Academia



Center for
CAREER
Development
PRINCETON UNIVERSITY



Basic Principles of Cover Letter Writing

This guide will help you understand what a cover letter is and how to write one.

1. A well-written cover letter can set you apart from candidates who don't submit one.

- Not all employers will ask for – or read – cover letters, but knowing how to thoughtfully convey your interests and qualifications is an important part of the application process.
- A cover letter answers a few basic questions: Who are you and what are you applying for? Why are you an ideal candidate for this particular opportunity? What value can you add to this organization?
- It is an opportunity to introduce yourself and showcase your qualifications.
- Be thorough yet concise, keeping it to one page if possible.

2. A cover letter complements your resume, highlighting and providing the context for your experiences and skills.

- The following table shows the main three differences between cover letters and resumes.

3. The format, content and purpose of a cover letter are highly individualized.

- Follow basic professional writing standards, paying special attention to differences in uploading a cover letter into an online application.
- Choose a font type that is easy to read such as Arial, Helvetica, Century Gothic or Times New Roman.
- Match the tone of the job description and the organization's website.
- Know that employers can tell when the cover letter is not customized.

Cover Letters	Resumes
Introduce yourself and explain what makes you qualified for a specific job in full paragraphs.	Summarize your relevant experiences and skills with bullet points.
Highlight your skills through two or three examples of past experiences to showcase you are an ideal candidate.	Provide a more detailed overview of your education and work history based on the list of the relevant skills and experiences.
Demonstrate your interest and knowledge of a specific position and company.	Use keywords from the job description to show you are a good fit for the job.
Serve as a writing sample.	

Cover Letter Structure Guide: Personalized Response to a Job Lead

This is a guide, not a formal template. Consider your own writing style and core aspects you want to highlight when composing your cover letters.

Your Full Name

Your street address, City, State, Zip Code | Your email address | Your cell number

(Note. Make the contact information section consistent with one in your resume)

Month, Day, YYYY (the date of your application submission)

Contact's Name

Contact's Title *(Note: Start here if contact name unknown)*

Organization Name

Organization Street Address

City, State, Zip Code

Dear Ms./Mr./Dr. Last Name,

(Note: If name unknown, use Dear Recruiter or Hiring Manager for the introduction)

Opening:

Describe the purpose of the cover letter by indicating the position that you are applying for and how you found it (e.g., Handshake, referred by a friend/alum, a representative you met at an information session). Then, briefly introduce yourself by name and educational background (e.g., a Ph.D. candidate in Comparative Literature at Princeton). Lastly, outline two primary skills or experiences (referred to in this document as **skill/experience A and B**) that an employer is looking for to demonstrate what makes you qualified for the position. These two skills or experiences will be discussed in detail in the following two body paragraphs.

Body *(Two paragraphs, one for skill/experience A and the other for skill/experience B):*

Highlight key accomplishments related to the major skills you emphasized in the introduction section and convey how they support your candidacy. Use a concrete example or story to demonstrate how **skill/experience A/B** allows you to meet the employer's needs.

When describing your accomplishment, use the **STAR** method (Situation, Task, your Action and Result) to provide the context and highlight the actions you took and the results demonstrating the impact that you made. Lastly, show a connection between your skill/experience and the needs, mission and/or values of the employer. Avoid copying the same information from your resume.

Closing:

Briefly summarize your qualifications to emphasize your enthusiasm for the opportunity. Indicate your interest in the opportunity to further discuss your qualifications. Include your contact information here if it's not already in the contact information section. Lastly, make sure to express your appreciation for being considered and their time reviewing your documents.

Sincerely,

Add your handwritten/online signature here

(you can create it online from here, <https://onlinesignature.com/draw-a-signature-online>)

Your full name

Alex Tiger

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January 15, 2021

Hiring Manager
Sanofi
55 Corporate Drive
Bridgewater, NJ 08807

Dear Hiring Manager,

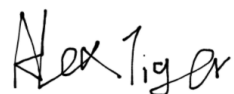
I am pleased to apply for the R&D Data Scientist position at Sanofi listed in Handshake. I am a Ph.D. candidate in Molecular Biology at Princeton University and expect to graduate in August 2021. Based on my extensive research experience conducting biological data analysis and my ability to communicate materials to different audiences, I am confident that I am qualified for the R&D Data Scientist position to identify evidence-informed solutions for drug discovery and development at Sanofi.

During my 4+ years of research inside and outside academia, I have successfully completed multiple research projects by using various novel computational and statistical methods. For example, I led data mining and analysis for a collaborative research project with Merck in 2019. As a Lead Researcher, I applied a variety of experimental and computational techniques to examine the genetic pathways, which provided practical insights for Merck's on-going drug discovery projects. I believe that my firsthand research experience can contribute to developing, evaluating, and applying novel computational and experimental methods for drug development efforts at Sanofi.

In addition to my research experience, my 3+ years of teaching and public speaking experience demonstrate that I can communicate scientific results and concepts to stakeholders at Sanofi. For example, when I taught an introduction to computational biology course, I took an audience-centered approach by focusing on breaking complicated material down by using real-world examples. In recognition of my communication abilities, I was awarded a departmental teaching award in 2019. My ability to effectively communicate technical and scientific materials to a general audience from non-technical backgrounds would offer added value when working with diverse teams at Sanofi.

Through my experiences as a Ph.D. researcher and teacher, I have developed the skills required to succeed as the R&D Data Scientist at Sanofi. My technical expertise, coupled with my abilities to communicate complex concepts to a wide range of stakeholders, would make me an asset to your team. Please do not hesitate to contact me if there is anything you need from me. Thank you in advance for your time and consideration. I look forward to learning more about the role and speaking with you in the near future.

Sincerely,



Alex Tiger