

Cover Letters: For On-Campus Employment

Hamilton College Career Center

What is a cover letter?

A cover letter, or letter of application, is a document in which you communicate to an employer what skills and experiences you have that are needed for a job. Not every job posting requires a cover letter, but it's a good idea to include one regardless because what you write in a cover letter can set you apart from other candidates. Cover letters written for on-campus job will be slightly more casual than cover letters written for formal internships or jobs. While you may send the same resume for each position you apply for, you should write a separate cover letter for each different position.

Musts: A cover letter *must*...

- Include a salutation and a closing:
e.g. Dear Mr. Smith, Sincerely,
- State the position for which you're applying
e.g. I am writing to express my interest in working (at the climbing wall).
- Describe the skills that you have in relation to the job and describe how you acquired those skills (past job/internship/extracurricular)
e.g. Having interned at (The New York Times) last summer, I am confident in my ability to (effectively express my ideas in writing).
- Be free of spelling and grammatical errors.
- Avoid the use of "love language"
e.g. I would love appreciate the opportunity to intern for (your Human Resources department) this summer.
- Be 1-3 paragraphs in length.

Best Practices: A good cover letter *should*...

- Be addressed to a specific person if a contact is provided.
e.g. Mr. John Smith
- Show enthusiasm for the position
e.g. I am excited at the prospect of (working with the Writing Center as a Writing Tutor).
- Have an introduction that provides relevant descriptors other than your name.
e.g. I am an (English and psychology double) major.
- Explain why the job fits both your interests and skills.
e.g. This position would allow me to gain some valuable experience in (marketing).
- List qualities that most employers would value.
e.g. A commitment to excellence, strong interpersonal skills, etc.
- Be supplemented with a follow-up contact and/or a visit to the department for positions you're particularly excited about

An Example Cover Letter:

Your address should go at the top (use your school address, with your school mailbox number)

Date

Name of the contact followed by his or her title or Department

Salutation

In your first paragraph, answer the questions: What position are you applying for? Why are you a good fit?

In your second paragraph, use your experiences, academics, or other activities to demonstrate your candidacy. Your argument will be stronger if you focus on the outcomes of your work and quantify values. Answer the questions: Why was (x) a better place because of the work you did there?

Closing: indicate enthusiasm for the position and how you can be contacted.

Thank them for their time/consideration.

Hamilton College
198 College Hill Rd.
Box 123
Clinton, NY 13323

25 July 2014

Guy Bossman
Hamilton College Career Center

Dear Mr. Guy Bossman,

I am a freshman at Hamilton College and am excited at the prospect of working with the Career Center as a Peer Presenter. Having taken two public speaking courses during my high school career, I am very comfortable speaking in front of large groups of people and my strong leadership skills would make me a valuable asset to the Career Center team.

During my senior year of high school, I organized a school-wide, group discussion about diversity in higher education. This project allowed me to independently pursue a topic that interests me and improved my organizational skills, teaching me how to effectively lead a group of my peers. Besides my academic commitments, I am also currently a member of the Debate Society and the Varsity Swim Team at Hamilton College.

I hope to have the opportunity to discuss with you the contribution I can make to the Career Center as a Peer Presenter, and am available to interview at your convenience. The best way to reach me is by phone at (123) 456-7890, or by email at ohamilton@hamilton.edu.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Olive Hamilton

If you don't see a specific position you're interested in listed on HamNET, don't be shy to call or visit departments of interest to you and ask them if you can help them out or be a student worker for them. Obviously, there are no guarantees that you will find something, but it doesn't hurt to ask.

For additional help: 1) Consult the Career Center's Cover Letter Guide online, or 2) Call (315) 859-4346 to make an appointment with a Peer Advisor.