

# COVER LETTER GUIDE

*How to write an OUTSTANDING cover letter and get your job  
application noticed!*

Office of Public Health Practice and Career Services



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## *What is a Cover Letter?*

Your cover letter is an important component of your job application. A well-written cover letter compels the hiring manager to pay close attention to your candidacy. Always include a cover letter as part of the application process. This is where you really get to sell yourself in the early stage of the application process. Remember that while the resume is about you, the cover letter is all about the employer and why they should be interested in you.

## *Types and Uses of Cover Letters*

There are several types of cover letters. This guide focuses on how to write a Letter of Application.

- **Letter of Application:** The most common, used in job searches where a specific job is advertised.
- **Blind Cover Letter:** Inquires about positions at a specific organization, but not a specific position. This type of letter works best if you have a contact within the company.
- **Networking Letter:** Requests an informational interview.

## *Writing a Traditional Cover Letter*

Before writing the cover letter, you should start by researching the company and reviewing the job description in depth. Start by creating an outline of your skills alongside the skills that the job requires. For each of these skills, list experiences where you learned/honed the skill. You can use examples from work, volunteering, and school. This brainstorming exercise will help you to format a strong cover letter.

When including these experiences in your letter, try to match the language of the job description. It is ok if you cannot include every skill listed in the job description. Having skills to improve upon will allow you to grow in the position. Address how you can apply the skills you do have to the position.

- In job descriptions, hiring managers usually list the required skills in order of importance.
- Use your outline to pick the strongest examples for your cover letter.
- Use a formal business letter format. See example below.
- Make sure that each letter is customized to the specific job to which you are applying.
- If there is only room to upload one document for an online application, insert your cover letter in front of your resume to combine into a single file.

## *What Should You Include?*

- Explain why you are sending your resume
- Provide relevant information about your experiences
- Call attention to your relevant skills
- Provide information beyond what is in your resume
- Reflect a positive attitude and show your enthusiasm for the position
- Convince the hiring manager to keep reading

## Parts of a Cover Letter

### Introduction

The introduction gives the employer a brief summary of who you are, your education, and why you are interested in the position.

- Use the simple and proper salutation, Dear \_\_\_\_\_ ,
  - Use Mr./Ms./Dr. as a prefix- never Mrs.
  - Do not include a first name.
- Try to address the letter to the hiring manager. If the hiring manager is not identified in the job description, you may be able to find the title of the person the position reports to and/or the department seeking to fill the position.
  - You may be able to find the hiring manager’s name on the organization’s website.
  - It is ok to consult any connections you may have within the company or contact the human resources department if you do not find the name of the hiring manager in the job description.
  - If you cannot find a name, you can use a generic salutation: “Dear Hiring Manager,” “Dear Hiring Committee,” or “Dear Recruiter.”
- Be clear about why you are writing the letter. For instance,
  - *I am applying for the Research Manager II in the Department of Cancer Prevention.*
  - *I would like to request an informational interview to find out more about your background.*
- Be sure you list the company name and a job number (if provided in the job description).
- It’s ok to name drop in the introduction.
  - If someone recommended you for the position, you should mention their name within the introduction.
  - Employers tend to trust referrals from their own employees.
- Include your education in this section.
- Describe why you are the best fit for the position.

Dear Dr. Adams,

Next month, I will walk across the stage to obtain my Master of Public Health Degree in Community Health with a minor in Epidemiology from The University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston (UTHealth) School of Public Health. This has been a great achievement in my life and I look forward to using it to assist the patients at The University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center in the Department of Prevention and Personalized Risk Assessment as a Research Coordinator.

### Body

The body of the letter is where you connect your resume, the job description, and the skills you have gained from your experiences. Using the experiences and examples from the outline you developed earlier, explain why you are the best person for the job. Back up your claims. Do not simply say “I have

excellent research skills,” without providing an example. Include descriptions of your experience that are relevant to the position. For instance you can follow with the example, “I have assisted with research in several labs, including serving as a graduate research assistant in Dr. Le’s lab at MD Anderson Cancer Prevention Research. There, I used SPSS and Access to report my findings.”

While it is acceptable to refer to other cover letters and job descriptions for inspiration, do not cut-and-paste text from documents other people have written. This leads to a disjointed and poorly written cover letter. As a job applicant, you must be able to describe your experiences and qualifications in your own words. You will be expected to do so during the job interview.

Other tips:

- Only include experiences that are relevant to the job description.
- Do not repeat your resume verbatim.
- Limit this section to 1-2 paragraphs.
- Examples can include paid and unpaid work.
- Incorporate key words from the job description.
- Do not mention your shortcomings.
- Do not include your salary expectations (unless the application requests this information).

As I completed my master’s program, I obtained a wealth of new research skills. At Harris Health Department, I spent three months using R and SAS to conduct both quantitative and qualitative research on tobacco sales throughout the county, particularly within one mile from schools. During my time volunteering at Houston Methodist, I worked with an interdisciplinary team of nutritionists, physicians, social workers, administrators, and physical therapists to develop a research protocol for new heart disease patients who receive surgery on inadequate insurance. During my time in both college and graduate school, I took on a number of leadership roles within student organizations. This helped me develop my leadership, organizational, and public speaking skills. I have lead meetings with over 30 people in attendance and developed events for over 200 people.



## Conclusion

Your conclusion should convey your enthusiasm about the position and summarize why you are a good fit for the job. You could mention your UTHealth School of Public Health education, your practicum, or your various work experiences as a final reminder of the wonderful candidate you are.

- Incorporate something about the organization's mission or vision here.
- Show your enthusiasm.
- Provide your contact information.
- Address issues such as moving to a new city or 5 year gaps in your resume.
- Request an opportunity to speak with the hiring manager.
- Thank them for their time.

MD Anderson's long standing mission of eradicating cancer and being at the forefront of medicine is exactly why I want to be one of the people who help cure diseases and cancers that take so much from so many. I believe my background in research, statistical analysis, community health, and management will make me a great candidate for this position. Thank you for your time and consideration. Please feel free to contact me anytime at 713-555-5555 or at janedoe@gmail.com. I look forward to speaking with you more about this position.

Sincerely,

Jane Doe

**Your information**

You can also list this under the date as a return address.

**Davy Alamo Crockett**

2020 Alamo Lane | San Antonio, TX 78597

DavyAlamo@gmail.com | 784-451-5971 | alamodave.wix.com

January 1, 2017

**Date of application**

Dr. Robert DeManager  
Director, Community Health  
Houston Health Department  
10000 Main St.  
Houston, Texas 70000

**Hiring manager's information**

Include their name, if you know it, their title, and the address of the organization.

Make sure that the document is left aligned.

Dear Dr. DeManager,

**Salutation****Introduction**

I would like to express my interest in the Community Research Coordinator II position (Job ID 45875) at the Houston Health Department. I am finishing my Master of Public Health degree from The University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston (UTHealth) School of Public Health. One of my professors Dr. Georgia Florida told me about this position and recommended that I apply.

As part of my degree program, I have completed several courses in community health practice, epidemiology, and biostatistics which will assist me in organizing research efforts and analyzing data. Additionally, as part of my degree program, I completed a practicum with the Travis County Health Department which serves Austin and the surrounding areas. This experience gave me insight into a fast growing city like Austin and the health issues that its citizens face. I found the growth strain on the entire county to be a challenge I loved tackling. I developed a program that allowed lower class senior citizens to gain free air conditioning units and worked with the health department to set up several health fairs for senior citizens. We also created a partnership with a bus company to provide free transportation to seniors who were no longer able to drive to their doctors' appointments.

**Body**

Using the skills I learned in the classroom to tackle a real world issue inspired me to want to make a difference in my community and help as many people as I can. My next goal is to use what I learned in my practicum to serve the residents of Houston and the Houston Health Department.

I believe my graduate education combined with my experience at the Travis County Health Department makes me a great candidate for this position. I would be happy to meet with you at any time to discuss this position. Thank you for your time, and I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

**Closing****Conclusion**

*Davy Alamo Crockett*

**Signature and name**

If you are submitting electronically, you do not have to include your signature.

Davy Alamo Crockett