Cover Letter 101

Stop overthinking, Cover Letters really aren’t that hard. Use basic essay writing skills taught in grade school and write about a topic you are an expert in, you. A key point many people forget is that a cover letter is not about writing your life story or regurgitating the information you put on your resume in sentence form; it is about elaborating on key points from your resume that demonstrate why you are a perfect fit for this position.

Organization:

1. Opening Paragraph
   - 2-4 Sentences
   - Explain who you are and why you are writing this letter

   Like in an essay, some people may choose to write this paragraph after creating the body. This paragraph should introduce you, and the ideas that will be elaborated on in the body.

2. Body Paragraph(s) 2(-3)
   - 3-5 Sentences (each)
   - Highlight and expand on important points from your resume

   The body of your cover letter can be made up of 1 or more paragraphs. You do not want any of your paragraphs to be too long as a reader looking at a giant block of text is more likely to skim.

3. Closing Paragraph
   - 2-4 Sentences
   - Restate interest, thank, and include action item

   Like a conclusion of an essay you want to restate the main points then wrap it up.
Prepping:

1. **Use the posting**
   
   Use the posting to decide what key points to discuss. Underline anything in the posting that you match, then include everything you have underlined somewhere in your resume and/or cover letter.

2. **Layout**
   
   Like essay writing, it’s best to start by creating an outline to identify/organize paragraphs and key points. Many students/recent grads will have 2 body paragraphs:
   
   i.  *Education: Currently, I am pursuing.... Passion that lead me here...This is what I am learning that’s relevant.... I’ve be trained and exposed to....*
   
   ii. *Experience: As a ..... relevant experience .. tell stories that demonstrate skills and/or requirements of the position.*

3. **Add notes**

   Review the outline and add in key words from the posting and any notes to keep you on track when writing.

Writing:

Now that you have created an outline and added notes this part should be a breeze. Like your resume keep it clear and concise and use the key words that you pulled from the posting. Once you have completed it have at least two other people proof read it.

Formatting:

Use a clear and easy to read format such as Arial or Calibri font size 10-12. Do not indent every paragraph, indent just the first paragraph or none. You want to use standard business letter formatting (see below) to address the letter. For you contact information, you can use the same header as you did for your resume, or you can list it at the top in business standard format.

Resume Header with name, email, phone, city...

   *Space*

Date

   *Space x2*

Employer Name

Employer Address

   *Space*

Dear Mrs.

   *Space*

RE: Posting Name #posting number

   *Space*

Opening paragraph

Submitting:

Submit documents as a PDF, unless otherwise indicated. This will prevent the formatting from going wonky. Additionally, when saving include your name, the position title, and the competition/posting number in the document title.