

# SMCC COVER LETTER GUIDE



## CREATING A BEST PRACTICE COVER LETTER

### What is a Cover Letter?

A cover letter is a one-page document typically submitted with your resume as part of an application. Each cover letter is customized to the specific job description and position. It adds a personal touch to share more about yourself, your enthusiasm for the job or organization, and key skills and qualifications. It is also an opportunity to show that you have researched the company or position and why you “fit” the role.

### How is a Cover Letter Different than a Resume

A cover letter is a supplemental document. Always include a cover letter with a resume, unless specifically told not to in the job posting. Including a cover letter gives you an additional opportunity to sell yourself for the role. In a resume you don’t typically use “I” statements, but in a cover letter you can write in a more personalized way to introduce yourself, while still being polite and professional.

Don’t just repeat everything an employer can already see on your resume. Show **additional** information, such as why you are interested in the position, why you want to work at the company (what you know or like about them as an employer), and how you are a good fit. A cover letter is a chance to show an employer that you know something about the company. It is an opportunity to further explain how you can meet their needs for the position. This is why a cover letter is always targeted and edited for the specific job description and role.

### Guidelines and Tips

#### Follow Application Directions for Submitting

- ✓ Be sure to follow the job description instructions on how to apply
- ✓ Save a master cover letter (as well as master resume and reference page) in Word or Google docs, but “save as” for a new cover letter tailored for each application. Submit as a PDF (unless told otherwise)

#### Use a “business letter” professional layout (see cover letter examples)

- ✓ Keep it clean. Use the same font and font size as your resume for consistency (Calibri, Arial, Cambria)
- ✓ Include date and your contact information at top of page, as well as the company address
- ✓ Try to address the cover letter to someone specific (a human resources director or manager if known). “Dear Mr. \_\_\_ or Dear Ms. \_\_\_\_\_. You can research best contact on website or LinkedIn. If you are not sure, write “Dear Hiring Manager” or “Dear Search Committee” (not “To Whom It May Concern”)
- ✓ Use single space paragraphs with double space between paragraphs

#### Customize language and keywords

- ✓ Be sure you are using the exact language they use in the job description. If they call for “customer service” don’t call it “client relations;” if they call for “teamwork,” don’t say “collaborating on teams”
- ✓ For digital submissions, you may choose to embed hyperlinks to your LinkedIn, online/Canva portfolio

#### Cautions about Using Generative AI

- ✓ Generative AI writing can sometimes read as canned, and almost too polished. Use with caution

# Cover Letter Format

Your Name  
Address  
Email  
Phone Number

Month Date, Year

Name of Employer/HR Manager  
Company Name  
Employer Street Address  
City, State Zip code

Dear Ms./Mr./Dr. Last name of Addressee:

## **Opening Paragraph: Greeting**

Be sure to state the position to which you are applying and name of the company. You may also include how you found out about the position and definitely include if you were referred by someone (for example someone you know who works at the company, or if you met a recruiter at a job fair). The first paragraph is also an opportunity to say why you are interested in the job and what qualifies you most for the position (recent graduate from SMCC or graduating from a particular pathway or major, etc.)

## **2nd Paragraph: Qualifications & “Fit” for Role**

In the second paragraph, you want to make a direct connection between the needs of the job (what they are looking for in the position) and how and why your experiences and what you have learned at school are a good match for what they are looking for. Don't focus on why this is good for you, stress on what you can do for *them*. Look for key words in the job description and speak to those using the words from the description. Draw upon any coursework or specific projects in particular. Things you have learned or done in your coursework and classes may be the MOST relevant things to highlight, even more important than part-time jobs you do to make money. Try to focus on highlights from your resume but don't just repeat everything word for word same as your resume. You also want to talk about your “personal brand” in a cover letter – what makes you, YOU. What personal qualities, interests and things are you good at that make you a good fit for the position. Employers want to hire a person, not just a skill set. Focus on if you are a hard worker or have good communication and teamwork skills and other qualities.

## **3rd Paragraph: Company Research**

In a cover letter, you also want to show that you know something about the company and that you have researched them. It is a chance to further show your interest in the job by demonstrating you know something about what they do, programs, projects you admire, or why you want to work for them. Employers love to hire people who are enthusiastic about them. Research the company website or read up on them, and show you have done your homework by referring to this in the application.

## **Closing Paragraph: Enthusiasm and Next Steps**

End by restating your interest in the position. Request an opportunity to interview, and let the reader know you look forward to a response and hope to have a chance to meet. Thank the reader for their time and consideration.

Sincerely,  
Your signature/Printed Name

# Cover Letter Paragraphs Step-By-Step

## Four Sections/Paragraphs

A one-page cover letter usually includes four distinct sections, which usually breaks down to four paragraphs.

*\*Note: you can reverse paragraph 2 and 3 if you choose or as makes sense on which is more relevant*

### Paragraph 1: Greeting and Self-Introduction

**Engage the reader:** State what position you are applying to and company name, explain why you are interested in the position, and potentially share how you learned about the position if applicable, or include anything that briefly shows knowledge of the company and how you know about them.

#### Examples for first paragraphs

##### PERSONAL CONTACT WHO WORKS AT THE COMPANY

“Please accept my application for the XXX position at XXX Company. I had the opportunity to meet your colleague, John Hammond, last fall when he was a guest presenter in our Human Resources Management class at SMCC, and he suggested I keep my eye out for open job positions ...”

##### PRIOR CONNECTION IF YOU MET BEFORE AT A CAREER FAIR, CLASS PRESENTATION, OR OTHER EVENT

“It is with great enthusiasm that I am submitting my application for the position of XXX at XXX Company. I will be graduating from Southern Maine Community College this spring, and had the opportunity to meet you at a recent career fair held on my campus...”

##### ENTHUSIASM FOR COMPANY OR SINCERE COMPLIMENT ABOUT WHAT YOU KNOW OR ADMIRE ABOUT THEM

“I am writing for consideration of the role of XXX at XXX Organization. I recently read that your company received the Maine Outstanding Employer Award, and I would love to be part of a workplace environment that focuses on employee satisfaction and professional development...”

### Paragraph 2: Qualifications and “Fit”

**Highlight specific skills and experiences:** Show how or why you are a good match for the role. It’s not just about YOU and what you want; instead focus on THEM to show you understand their needs for the role and explain what you can do to support the position. Show your impact - whether a specific experience, an outcome from a particular project, a difference you made on a team, or a number or metric.

#### Opening sentence options for paragraph highlighting qualifications and “fit”

##### PRIOR EXPERIENCE

Share a **prior experience** or short story/example that shows “fit” for the job role

“As an intern at XXX company, I had the opportunity to (share something you did in another position or circumstance similar to the role)...”

##### CLASS PROJECTS OR ASSIGNMENTS

Stress specific skills they ask for and how you learned or demonstrated those in a **class project**

“In my Auto CAD class, I worked on several sample projects including creating a 3D model of a shed, house, and mechanical structure...”

##### SKILLS & ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Mention any specific **skills or accomplishments** or achievements as applicable

“I see from your job description that you are looking for someone who has customer services and problem-solving skills and works well under pressure. I was able to develop these skills in my customer service retail and waitressing positions, and was even recognized as employee of the month...”

### Paragraph 3: Specific Company Knowledge

**Show Research and Company Knowledge:** Let employer see that you know something about their company, mission, specific programs, past projects, future goals, reputation, etc. This shows enthusiasm and focus. Each cover letter should be unique and targeted to the specific position and company.

Do your Research!

- Look at the company website
- Read anything you can about them online or in the news
- If possible, speak to someone who works there
- Follow any of their postings on LinkedIn or social media to learn more what they are doing

Even if you have mentioned something about the company earlier in the first paragraph, this paragraph is an opportunity to expand on your knowledge and enthusiasm.

#### Opening sentence options for paragraph highlighting company research

“I am most interested in XXX company because...”

“I recently read an article in the *Portland Press Herald* about your XXX program, and am really impressed with this new initiative.”

“I first learned about your company in my market research class at SMCC, when we had to do a market analysis assignment and I chose your company to research.”

“I recently watched a video recording of a talk your President & CEO did at a Maine Business Forum last year, and I loved his point about...”

### Paragraph 4: Closing

**End on a high note with call to action:** Close your cover letter with and enthusiasm for role and next steps

- Be positive and optimistic in summing up your enthusiasm for the job
- Be pro-active in expressing your interest in interviewing for the position
- Be polite and action-oriented, without being too pushy or arrogant about next steps
- Be appreciative their time and consideration and hopes for the future

#### Opening sentence options for closing paragraph

“I believe my skills and experiences would be an excellent match for what you are seeking in this position, and am excited about the possibility of working at your organization. I welcome the opportunity to meet with you and interview to share more about how I can support your goals. Please let me know if there is any other information I can provide at this time. I appreciate your time and consideration and look forward to hearing from you.”

#### SIGNATURES

Ideally sign your cover letter with both a written (or electronic) signature and printed name

### Mistakes to Avoid

**Proofread! Proofread! Proofread!**

- Be careful of spelling, grammar, typos and other mistakes. Have someone review before submitting.
- Be sure **customize EVERY cover letter** and double check you are sending the correct cover letter to the right company (*you'd be surprised how many send the wrong cover letter for job application!*)

**Be confident and positive, but don't over-sell**

- Be authentic and don't lie! Be sure anything you write is something you can talk about in an interview.
- Don't think you have to have every single thing an employer asks for. Stick to the skills or experience you do have, and don't try to justify what you lack. Stay positive!

# Sample Cover 1

Jane Doe

Biddeford, ME | (207) 111 -7777 | [Jdoe27@yahoo.com](mailto:Jdoe27@yahoo.com)

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May 21, 2026

Ms. Alicia Johnston  
Director of Human Resources  
Pen Bay Hospital  
6 Glen Cove Dr.  
Rockport, ME 04856

Dear Ms. Johnston and Hiring Committee,

Please accept my application for the Registered Nurse (RN) position at Pen Bay Hospital in the Medical/Surgical Unit. I am a recent graduate from Southern Maine Community College's Associate Degree in Nursing program. I had the opportunity to complete one of my clinical practicums at Maine Medical Center in the Medical/Surgical Unit and enjoy working with a wide range of patients from pediatrics to geriatrics in an acute care setting. I have the compassion and sensitivity to provide exceptional patient-centered care and enjoy working with patients with a variety of conditions from strokes, to post-operative recovery, and issues with chronic illness. I recently passed my NCLEX exam, and am excited to begin my career, and would love to be part of your team.

During my education at SMCC, I developed strong nursing foundational skills in patient assessment and monitoring, and implementation of care plans and evaluation of patient outcomes. I am organized, detail oriented, and always follow protocol in regards to record-keeping of patient's progress and reporting any changes to the healthcare team. Through my clinical experiences, I further developed skills in communication, empathetic listening, and teamwork to deliver optimal patient-centered care. In addition, I have had the opportunity to work with patients from diverse cultural and language backgrounds, and enjoy working with a wide range of individuals and families.

I am interested in working for Pen Bay Hospital because I am originally from midcoast region and have recently moved back to the area. I have heard great things about your staff and healthcare team from my nursing instructors and mentors in the field. I would like to work with a small collaborative team, and was also impressed to read that your hospital has received a "Best Place to Work" distinction two years in a row.

I am excited about the prospect of this position and what I could bring to the role. When I entered the nursing program at SMCC, I did not know what specialty I would be most interested in, but since my rotational experience in Medical/Surgical care, I now know this is where I would love to serve. I welcome the opportunity to interview with your hiring committee to further discuss the position and my qualifications for the role. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

*Jane Doe*

Jane Doe

## Sample Cover Letter 2

John Doe  
14 Penbrook Drive  
South Portland, ME 04106  
jsdoe420@gmail.com  
(207) 799-3838

August 1, 2026

Dan Simpson, Principal  
Bickfords Elementary  
486 Billings Rd.  
Westbrook, ME 54321

Dear Mr. Simpson & Hiring Committee,

I was so excited to learn from my Professor, Amanda Schultz, that there was an Education Technician I position opening at Bickford's Elementary School. I will be graduating this August from Southern Maine Community College with an Associate's degree in Early Childhood Education. While in school, I have had the opportunity to shadow and assist teachers as a volunteer at both the pre-school and elementary school levels. I also worked at the Portland Boys and Girls Club last summer as a summer counselor. I love working with elementary aged students and hope to continue my education for a Bachelor's Degree in Education at the University of Southern Maine in the near future.

While a student at SMCC, I learned about the fundamentals of teaching young learners, how to develop lesson plans, and other special topics. I assisted in a Kindergarten classroom at Six Corners School in Buxton, working two hours per week in the classroom and assisting students in reading and math. Through this experience I also observed how to best manage behavioral issues in the classroom. I also observed and assisted in a second-grade classroom at Limington Middle School during winter break. I am creative and artistic, and I love including hands-on, experiential activities in the classroom to engage students in learning. In my spare time, I also paint and play piano. In addition to becoming a teacher, I would love to be involved in any school or district after-school arts activities.

I would love to work at Bickford's Elementary School as I know one of your Volunteer Aid's, Karen Benchwick, who helps out at your school. Karen said that your school is small and community oriented, and very supportive of student-centered learning. I would love to work in a school setting where teachers and staff put students needs first, and I can grow as a teacher.

I believe my skills and experience would be a great fit for the Education Technician I position, and I would love to be part of a team. I have attached a copy of my resume and three professional references on a separate page. I would love the opportunity to interview with you to further discuss my qualifications for this Ed Tech position. I hope to hear from you soon and thank you for your consideration. Please feel free to contact me at the above email or phone number.

Sincerely,

*John Doe*

John Doe