



# COVER LETTER GUIDE

The purpose of a cover letter is to **capture the attention** of the prospective employer in order to make a positive first impression and encourage him/her to read your resume. Your cover letter is an introduction your resume.

- It is your first introduction as well as an introduction to the information you expand upon in your resume.
- The cover letter should be clear, concise and convincing.
- It is **not** to exceed one page, and preferably, not more than three quarters of the page.

The basic structure of a strong cover letter includes the following:

## 1. Your name, address, phone number, and email address

## 2. Date

## 3. Name and address of the person or organization you are contacting

It is very important to always have a specific name of the person who will be reading your resume. This information can often be acquired through a phone call to the company, or checking the company's website. If you cannot find a name, use a job title. Do not use "To Whom It May Concern."

## 4. Greeting

Get a name and/or position title such as "Dear Ms. Smith," "Dear Human Resource Director," "Dear Search Committee." Avoid "To Whom It May Concern."

## 5. Paragraph #1

This paragraph briefly explains why you are writing to them and/or how you found out about the position. If you have any personal contact(s) within the company who assisted you in finding the position opening, this would be the paragraph to mention the individual(s), assuming you have permission to use his/her name. Also, state how you resonate with the company and/or opportunity. Make a brief statement as to why you are interested and why you are a good candidate.

## 6. Paragraph #2 & #3

These paragraphs tell how you can benefit the organization with your education, skills and experience.

## 7. Last paragraph

This paragraph indicates that **you** will follow-up and ends with a complimentary closing. If you are handing a paper cover letter to an employer you should remember to always sign your name as well as type it.

### Be sure that you...

- Print your cover letter on the same kind of paper that you use for your resume (if applicable).
- Do not fold your resume and cover letter! Use a large 8 ½ x 11 envelope if you are mailing your resume.

**Questions? Contact the Career Center call 301-447-5202 or email [careercenter@msmary.edu](mailto:careercenter@msmary.edu)**

# REFERENCES

The purpose of the list of references is to give employers access to people who will provide more information and insight into your qualifications. NOTE: Ask permission to list someone as a reference and give a copy of your resume to your references. Keep references updated on what you apply to when you provide their name.

Prepare a separate page listing your references and their contact information (use “resume paper” just as you did for printing out your cover letter and resume).

The following are the basics for preparing your reference page:

## 1. Your heading

It should appear the same way it does on your resume.

## 2. Title

Title the page **REFERENCES** and center it between the left and right margins.

## 3. Provide details on your references

When you list references, give the name of the person, his or her job title, place of employment, address and phone number and email address. It is best to use work rather than home information unless your reference specifically gives his/her home information.

- Most employers require **3** references  
It is most helpful to ask a variety of people such as employers, professors, an academic advisor or personal/character references, who will provide different perspectives. Relatives are usually NOT accepted as references.
- Obtain permission from each person you wish to use as a reference. Make sure all contact information is current.

- Print the reference page on the same type of paper as your resume.
- Keep your references informed about your job search. When you have obtained a position, write notes to your references, thanking them for their assistance.

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