



A Guide to Cover Letters



NSM Career Center

**College of Natural Sciences
and Mathematics**

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The Basics

PURPOSE

Much like an elevator pitch, the cover letter is your chance to explain how you'll contribute & fit in the company.

- Provide insight into how you are uniquely suited for the position
- Express a genuine interest in a specific position at a specific organization
- Show written communication skills

COMPANY RESEARCH

If you're not equipped with basic knowledge of the company, how can you properly demonstrate that you're right for the role?

Learn the following:

- What the company does
- The company's services and/or products
- The company's people and culture
- Check the company's website for their latest news

IMPORTANT

You absolutely must write a unique cover letter for every application.

A well-written cover letter is essential, not optional.



Formatting: Formal Business Letter

HEADER

- Alignment flush left.
- Your contact information
- Date: Month, Day, Year
- Company's full street address.
- Greet using the specified contact's name. If unknown, use "Dear Hiring Manager."

INTRO & PURPOSE

- Identify the specific job.
- Options to "hook" the reader:
 - Reference a company program, product, or value that aligns with your skills, showing genuine interest.
 - Highlight a relevant personal achievement directly tied to the job posting.

The hook should be directly relevant and showcase your qualifications, not a cliché or unnecessary embellishment.



BODY

- Highlight your top 3 hard and soft skills from the job posting to self-promote effectively.
- Describe how you developed or applied these skills in your work or education.

CLOSING

- Thank the reader for their time & consideration.
- Give your number for further discussion.
- Sign-off: "Sincerely" or "Kind regards" & your name.

IMPORTANT

- Same font as resume
- Never more than 1 page
- Use the posting's terminology. EX: Data Science Vs.. Data Analytics Vs. Data Analysis

The Do's and Don'ts

Do's

- Connect the dots between the resume, your strengths & experiences, & the role.
- Explain how this job fits into your career plan.
 - EXAMPLE: Biotech Internship > Future Research Physician
- Be genuine, showing your professional values and interests.
- Include relevant details from your company research.
- Identify the specific person who is your referral for the position, if applicable.

Don'ts

- Don't use AI to write your cover letter without revising!
- Don't rehash your resume.
- Don't overshare irrelevant details about your family, hobbies, health, etc. to avoid discrimination.
- Avoid overly casual or cliches, such as "uniquely qualified" or "Take care."
- Avoid humor. Humor rarely translates on paper.
- NEVER claim to have skills that you don't have!

Employer Insights



IS THIS APPLICANT GENUINELY INTERESTED IN THIS INDUSTRY OR JOB?

WILL THIS APPLICANT FIT IN WITH MY TEAM?

WILL THIS APPLICANT MAKE THE MOST OF THE EXPERIENCE?

DOES THIS APPLICANT HAVE 50% OF THE JOB SKILLS?

PROOFREAD YOUR LETTER!

- USE MICROSOFT EDITOR OR GRAMMARLY.
- AVOID ANY EMBARRASSING TYPOS
 - “KING REGARDS” IS VERY COMMON.
- ASK A MENTOR, PROFESSOR, OR FRIEND TO READ IT.

Sample Job Posting

Job Description:

Forensic Science Center is now seeking a full-time Forensic Analyst in our Biology section.

POSITION SUMMARY

Under the direction of the Manager of Forensic Biology, the analyst performs routine to moderately complex analysis of biological samples within the Houston Forensic Science Center. Prepares accurate and precise notes and technical reports. Performs maintenance, calibration, and quality control on scientific instruments. Provides technical assistance to police officers, member of the District Attorney's office, and other members of law enforcement agencies and the criminal justice community. Testifies as an expert witness regarding the scientific conclusions obtained from analysis. Partners with management and other staff to ensure other tasks are completed as assigned.

Experience and Skills:

MINIMUM EDUCATIONAL REQUIREMENTS

The position requires a bachelor's degree in biology, Molecular Biology, Biochemistry, Genetics, from an accredited college/university (transcripts required). Subjects providing a basic understanding of forensic DNA analysis, as well as courses or training in statistics and population genetics as it applies to forensic DNA analysis are strongly preferred. A skills assessment will be given to evaluate knowledge level.

MINIMUM EXPERIENCE REQUIREMENTS

Experience working in a DNA/Biology forensic environment is strongly preferred. Certification or the ability to quickly gain certification is also required.

KNOWLEDGE AND SKILL REQUIREMENTS

- Excellent verbal and written communication skills
- Ability to work well with all levels of employees and outside contacts
- Demonstrated ability to think critically, troubleshoot effectively and make timely and sound decisions
- Demonstrated ability to work well with details
- Proven expertise in Microsoft Office applications is a plus.

Sample Cover Letter

Chelsea McCoog
CMcCoog@central.uh.edu
713-307-1927

December 20, 2024

Forensic Science Center
Attn: HR Recruiter
500 Justice Lane
Gotham, TX 77777

Dear Hiring Manager,

I was excited to see that the Forensic Science Center recently received over \$3 million dollars in federal grant money to assist in the forensic work to solve crimes. The opportunity to utilize my degree in Biology with a minor in Chemistry in the position of Forensic Analyst- Biology to identify perpetrators and gain justice for crime victims is appealing to me.

My undergraduate research experience provides a strong foundation in the process & analysis of biological samples. In the lab, I cultured model organisms and conducted PCR analysis to characterize a mutant gene in *Drosophila melanogaster* and used a gel electrophoresis method to separate DNA. I also diluted solutions, produced cultures of various microorganisms, and performed chemical separations with liquid chromatography. Based on the quality of my research, I was selected to present my scientific conclusions at the University of Houston's Spring Academic Showcase, where I honed my speaking and presentation skills to explain my research in layman's terms to over 100 attendees. I am confident in my ability to work with the criminal justice community in the field and in the courtroom,

I am currently scheduled to take the Forensic DNA certification exam from the American Board of Criminalistics next month. I look forward to discussing my qualifications for this position. I can be reached at 713-307-1927. Thank you for your time and attention.

Sincerely,



Chelsea McCoog

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Go to AccessUH > HireNSM > Counseling tab at the top right corner and schedule a free virtual appointment for a personalized cover letter review.

The HireNSM team looks forward to working with you!

