

Cover Letter Basics for CBS Undergraduates

A cover letter is a formal document that employers often request along with a résumé and reference list when accepting applications for a full-time or internship position opening. The purpose of a cover letter is to share additional information about yourself, your interest in the position, and the skills and experiences that you believe make you a strong candidate. While a résumé provides the basic facts of your past extra-curricular and work experience, a cover letter also allows you to elaborate on your most relevant qualifications.

Below are some considerations to keep in mind when writing a cover letter. Opinions on the best way to write a cover letter may differ, but these are considered best practices by our CBS Career Team. You can also apply this advice for writing an e-mail to an employer if you are submitting your resume directly to someone instead of through an application system.

For your reference, we've included an example cover letter at the end of this document.

FORMATTING

Select a legible font, such as Arial, Cambria, Calibri, Garamond, Georgia, or Times New Roman. It is acceptable to use a font between 10 and 12. For margins, most Word documents default to a one-inch margin. It is appropriate to adjust your margins down to .5 of an inch, if necessary, but it is expected that your cover letter does not exceed one page in length (front side only).

CONTACT INFORMATION

Your cover letter should feature a heading with your contact information. For consistency, many students choose to use the same heading they have on their résumé. Make sure to include your name, street address, city, state, zip, phone number, and e-mail address. If your address is temporary, indicate this and provide the date that your address expires. Offer a permanent address where you can be reached after that date. If for any reason you are not comfortable providing your home address, an e-mail and phone number is often enough contact information for an employer to reach you.

EMPLOYER INFORMATION

The address of the organization or employer should be listed immediately underneath your contact information. Make sure to format this information to the left side of the page.

GREETING

Use a formal greeting to open your cover letter. The most commonly used is "Dear" followed by a title such as Ms., Mr. or Dr. followed by the point of contact's last name, and a colon.

Avoid using "To Whom in May Concern" when possible. Often position descriptions will list a contact person, or you can visit the organization's website or call them to find out the most relevant contact. When applying at a large organization it may be difficult to know exactly who will be reading your application materials, but even addressing your letter to a specific office such as the Human Resources Team, Intern Coordinator or Hiring Team is more specific.

PARAGRAPH ONE (INTRODUCTION)

The first paragraph of your cover letter should include information about which position you are applying for, how you learned about the position, and a brief outline of what you will address in the remainder of your letter.

PARAGRAPH TWO AND THREE (THE BODY)

Depending on the position, you may have one or two paragraphs in the main body of your cover letter. The body of your cover letter is your opportunity to be specific about the experiences that make you well-qualified for the position. Identify key skills or responsibilities by using the job description. Unlike your résumé, the body of your cover letter can have a more narrative approach. You can also use this section to connect experiences that may not immediately seem relevant to the position, but provided you excellent transferable skills such as learning effective communication skills, engaging in tasks that require strong attention to detail, or engaging with customers.

CLOSING

Use your closing paragraph to reiterate your interest in the position and provide any logistical information that may be helpful to the employer. Examples of information you could include are: any upcoming travel to the location of the position or your available start day if you are applying for a summer opportunity or will be graduating soon.

SIGNATURE

The standard closing is Sincerely, but you can also close with a statement such as, Thank you for your consideration, followed by your signature and your full name typed underneath. Many applications are submitted electronically so it may be a good idea to create an electronic signature. You can do this by signing a sheet of paper, scanning and saving it to insert at the end of your document.

Have Questions?

We invite you to schedule an appointment for a cover letter review or for any other career related questions you may have. For additional assistance with your cover letter, contact CBS Student Services at 612-624-9717 to schedule an appointment with a Career Coach.

Mohammed Alvi

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Takeda Pharmaceuticals
9450 Winnetka Ave N
Minneapolis, MN 55445

February 26th, 2018

Dear Takeda Hiring Team,

I recently came across your posting for a Metrology Technician (#45613) at the Brooklyn Park, Minnesota Takeda location. As a Biology major with a minor in Pharmacology, I am very interested in the pharmaceutical work that your company does, as well as your mission to promote social responsibility. My previous experience as a seasonal laborer at Snow Packed Foods, as well as my work as a direct care professional with ACR Homes, has provided me the opportunity to demonstrate strong attention to detail, and follow strict protocols and procedures- both relevant skills for metrology work.

As a seasonal laborer with Snow Packed Foods, I was responsible for overseeing and maintaining the operation of equipment for processing fresh vegetable product as well as assisting my supervisor with repairing and installing new packaging and process equipment. This work required strong attention to accuracy and precision as well as the ability to learn about and understand complex equipment. Through this experience I learned the importance of following Standard Operating Procedures to ensure the safety of myself, and other employees. I would apply many similar skills in my work as a Metrologist to ensure that the manufacturing systems at Takeda function optimally.

My work as a direct care professional also demonstrates that I have the necessary skills for this position. In this role, I was required to follow strict procedures and protocols related to moving patients, and providing access to numerous medications. For the safety of myself and my patients I learned the importance of meticulously documenting my work and provided a detailed account of any unplanned events. This skillset is vital to work of a Metrologist whose booking must be accurate to eliminate the possibility of uncertainty and error.

As I finish my undergraduate degree, I am excited to apply the skills that I have gained in my previous work in a biological sciences setting. I believe my science background, along with my understanding of the importance of attention to detail, accurate documentation, and following Standard Operating Procedures would make me a considerable asset to the metrology team at Takeda Pharmaceuticals. I look forward to the possibility of discussing this opportunity further with you in an interview.

Thank you for your consideration,

M. Alvi

Mohammed Alvi

Tanaya Jackson

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612-554-4529

(Name of Hiring Manager, Recruiter, Supervisor or Committee Chair)
(Company, Organization, or Department Name)
(Street Address)
(City, State, Zip Code)

(Date)

Dear Ms. Christy:

I am interested in applying for the botany field technician opening listed on the Society for Conservation Biology website. I am currently a senior at the University of Minnesota and I will be graduating this spring with a degree in Ecology, Evolution, and Behavior from the College of Biological Sciences. I have an interest in the conservation of flora and fauna as well as habitat restoration, and I plan to pursue a Master's degree in conservation biology. I feel this position would be a great way for me to broaden my conservation experience while also exploring my interests. I also have a strong background in field work and field data collection methods, making me an ideal candidate for the position.

Much of my experience in restoration and habitat management came from my internship this past summer with Helpers of the Minnesota River. I spent the summer performing field work in prairie and riparian ecosystems with the organization's ecologists. The majority of this work was botany-related, and included vegetation plot surveys, seed collection, sorting, and dispersal, and data entry. This internship, as well as college botany coursework, introduced me to the process of using the dichotomous key for vegetation identification. I was able to use this knowledge to identify sedges and other native prairie plants in the field. Through this internship I developed an interest in conservation and management of vegetation, which I would be excited to continue with the Association for Pragmatic Ecology.

For the past three years, I have been employed with the Animal Communications Lab at the University of Minnesota. This job has been my greatest source of field work experience, with most of this work conducted in wetlands late at night. My extensive research experience in ecology and animal behavior has allowed me to become comfortable performing all aspects of the scientific method with little to no supervision. This research experience has also helped me to become proficient in using Excel for recording and managing data.

My previous botany experience as well as my enthusiasm for field work and attention to detail would allow me to be a considerable asset to the field crew this summer. I'm available to begin work mid-May and I can continue for as long as I am needed. I would welcome the opportunity to contribute to the conservation of native habitat, and I would be excited to learn more about the Shenandoah Valley flora through this position and also in my own time if needed. I appreciate your consideration.

Sincerely,



Tanaya Jackson