COVER LETTERS for GRADUATE STUDENTS

What’s the point of a cover letter?

- To customize your background for a specific job. It guides the reader by summarizing the skills and experiences relevant to a particular opportunity.
- To demonstrate your research, writing, and analytical skills. It allows you to communicate your knowledge of the employer, industry, and career field.
- To convey your motivation and professionalism. It reflects your personality, enthusiasm, and interest.

Do letters need to be customized?
Yes. Effective cover letters are marketing tools for your job or internship search. Since marketing is about understanding and meeting the needs of a specific audience, your letter should focus on the needs of an employer. These needs or requirements are typically described in a job posting, and this can help you tailor your background to fit each opportunity. The quality and customization of your writing will impress an employer and distinguish you from other candidates. Tempted to use a generic letter? Consider this: Recruiters say they typically spend less than 30 seconds skimming a candidate’s correspondence. Distinguish yourself with carefully crafted and compelling communication.

Since recruitment is done online, it is acceptable to send your cover letter electronically. It may be sent both as an attachment and pasted directly into the body of an email. Regardless of the method, it should still be one page or less and maintain the same formality and quality as if you were turning in an important term paper.

- Address a specific person. A quick telephone call to an employer can help determine the name and correct spelling of your recipient. If you can’t get this information, address the letter to "Dear Hiring Manager" or "Dear Human Resource Manager." Another suggestion is to use a subject line in place of the salutation (e.g., Application for Research Analyst Position). Avoid salutations such as "Dear Sir," "Dear Madam," or "To Whom It May Concern." Do not use the term, Mrs., when addressing a woman. There is no need to use a first name in the salutation: Dear Ms. Smith, not Dear Mary Smith.

- Keep it brief. Limit the letter to one page. Remember: a cover letter is intended to complement your resume, not repeat its content. Three to four paragraphs is sufficient.

- Match yourself to the opportunity. Effective cover letters are accomplishment-oriented and focus on specific skills and abilities. Avoid saying you’re “responsible” for a task or project; instead, cite what you achieved and how it relates to the demands of the position you’re applying for.
- **Demonstrate your interest.** Show what you’ve learned about the organization and/or industry. This is where your research and networking will pay off. Where appropriate, use the vocabulary of a specific discipline or industry.

- **Write in your own style.** You can adopt a conversational tone as long as your writing is flawless and grammatically correct. Avoid bland, overused statements such as "Enclosed please find my resume for your review” and “Please do not hesitate to call me.” Use active voice and powerful verbs for lively communication.

- **Put yourself in the reader’s position.** Count the number of sentences that you began with the word, “I.” Then, do an edit. Avoid "I” and "me” and focus instead on the reader by using the word "you" as often as possible. Communicate what you can **contribute** to the reader’s organization, rather than what you expect to get.

- **Pay attention to detail.** Employers value effective and careful communicators, and your writing skills are displayed in your cover letter. Grammar, spelling, or typographical errors will send you to the ‘discard’ pile. Ask an expert to proofread your letter for content, clarity, and correctness. **Tip for emails:** write in a Word document and then paste it into your email.

- **First impressions count.** The average employer receives over 200,000 letters annually from job applicants. Make yours visually appealing.
  - Type your letter using the same font as your resume. Keep it simple (e.g., Times New Roman, 12 point).
  - If you’re using a hard copy, print it on the same stock of paper as your resume. White or off-white color is preferable.
  - Sign a hard copy letter with blue or black ink.

**How do I follow-up after sending a letter?**
Unless an employer indicates otherwise, you may follow-up with a phone call or email within 5-10 days of receipt. If you can’t reach the original recipient by phone or online, send a follow-up about the status of your application and expressing your continued interest.

**Are there other types of letters used in job search?**
Most job search correspondence can be categorized as follows: Check our website for examples.

1. **Cover Letter:** accompanies resume when applying for job or internship
2. **Thank you Notes:** follow-up to an interview or networking meeting
3. **Acceptance Letter:** confirms acceptance of an offer
4. **Networking Email:** requests career information or an opportunity for informational interview
Sample Cover Letter Format

Your Street Address
City, State, Zip
Current Date  [4 returns]

Name
Title or Position
Department
Company
Street Address
City, State, Zip  [2 returns]

Dear Dr./Mr./Ms. Last Name:  [2 returns]

**Why Them? Engage your reader.** Beginnings are important. Remember: “You had me at ‘hello’” To get your reader interested, avoid generic openings such as, “Enclosed please find my resume …” State your goal and the name of the position. Indicate how you heard of the opening, and if you have a referral from someone, mention that individual by name. If you are inquiring about potential opportunities, describe the type of position you are seeking. Personalize the letter by expressing an interest in this particular employer and illustrate you have done some research about the organization.

**Why You? Sell yourself.** Make the match between you and the position / organization. Be as specific as possible in addressing the requirements listed in the job posting. Regardless of your many valuable skills and traits, focus only on the ones the employer needs. Describe your most relevant qualifications and illustrate with examples. Demonstrate how your background and experience qualify you for this job.

**What’s next? Close with enthusiasm.** Restate your interest in the opportunity and an interview. Indicate that you will call to follow-up (if you’re certain you will do this). Then make sure you do! Employers appreciate initiative and motivation. [2 returns]

Sincerely,  [4 returns]

(Sign your name here)

Your typed name  [2 returns]

Enclosure
Dear Mr./Ms. Last Name,

As a graduate student in clinical psychology at Tufts University, I am writing to apply for the Behavioral Therapist position, an opportunity I learned about on the May Institute’s website. My interest in working with the May Institute began last spring when I met a representative at the Tufts Career Fair. Since then, I have learned more about your services to children and I am eager to offer you the benefit of my experiences teaching and working with children and young adults.

Through my studies as a Clinical Psychology major, I have had the opportunity to study child development and psychology in a structured environment and to complement my theoretical knowledge with hands-on training at the Eliot-Pearson School. In addition, my work tutoring and mentoring students both in the United States and abroad involved communication with parents and other providers.

In reviewing your requirements, I recognize the relevance of my experience interning and working as a Paraprofessional at the SEEK Program in the Somerville School District. SEEK (Socio-Emotional Education at the Kennedy) is a special needs program focusing on students with emotional, behavioral and learning disabilities and disorders, as well as on students with other disabilities. At SEEK, I have had the opportunity to develop skills and abilities such as strong behavior management techniques, effective interviewing skills, and constructive teaching methods. Working with the students and staff of this special needs program and learning the theories and applications of the Crisis Prevention Institute has also emphasized the importance of focusing instruction on life skills and issues of problem solving, patience, control, and safety.

I am eager to discuss your position and to learn more about the May Institute. I will call you in the next few days to follow up and see if it is appropriate to arrange an interview. In the meantime, I can be reached at (phone number) or (email). Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Your Signature

Your Name
DATE

First and Last Name
Title/Position
Employer Name
Street Address
City, State, Zip

Dear Mr./Ms. Last Name,

With a strong, focused interest in your work at Franciscan Children’s Hospital, I have consistently visited your website seeking an appropriate opportunity to apply my graduate education and extensive experience working with children with special needs. Last week’s listing for a Psychology Services Master’s level position allows me to offer you the skills and knowledge gained by working with youngsters with cognitive and physical disabilities, communication disorders, and health impairments.

I began my journey with children with special needs several summers ago by volunteering with a program using Equine-Assisted Therapy for children with physical disabilities, as well as children with Down Syndrome. Today, I am completing my Master’s program with an internship in an environment similar to yours: a school within a hospital setting where my work involves skill development with children with Asperger’s and related disorders.

My professional growth has also included the following experiences that are applicable to your position:

• Contributing to children’s development as part of a team model involving a range of therapies and services in medical and education settings, from McLean’s Hospital to Tufts Educational Day Care Center;

• Teaching at a developmentally-based inclusive lab school involving children with Autism, Aspergers, Down Syndrome, leukemia, as well as sensory-integration disorder and emotional/behavioral disorders;

• Working one-on-one with a child diagnosed with PDD, as well as socializing with other children with disabilities in a sensory intensive environment; and

• Using American Sign Language one-on-one with children with a range of developmental delays, as well as designing a weekly ASL preschool curriculum for an inclusive classroom;

My work has taught me that each student is a child first, and only then a child with special needs. My philosophy embraces the use of physical space and physical activities, as well the use of art, music, play, and computers in a way that is personally relevant to each child. Additionally, I am keenly interested in the connection between the educational and medical professions, and I believe that the Kennedy Day School offers an opportunity to meet my foremost goal - to work directly with children special needs.

As a teacher, I guide children toward self-reliant, independent problem solving. I hope to do this with the students at Kennedy Day School, and I welcome your call at (phone number) to discuss strong interest in your position.

Sincerely,

Your Signature

Your Name
Dear Mr./Ms. Last Name,

I hope you will consider me a strong candidate for the R&D RF & Microwave Product Engineer position which I identified on your website. An MSEE candidate (GPA 4.0) at Tufts University, I am familiar with your work because of my research on your products as well as my first-hand observations at the Microwave Theory and Techniques International Conference (MTT) where I presented last year. In my role as a Research Assistant for the past three years, I have worked in Tufts’ Millimeter and Submillimeter Wave Laboratory, testing and measuring dielectric properties of polymers and ceramics in the millimeter wave frequencies.

To help you evaluate my candidacy, here are additional aspects of my background that most closely match your needs and environment:

- Experience with statistical analysis of dielectric data, measuring the same materials with four different measurement systems, including the Agilent 8510C Network Analyzer;

- Extensive testing of dielectric materials while investigating temperature effect on the permittivity and loss tangent data over the millimeter wave frequencies;

- Proficiency with Agilent’s HPADS software, which I have been using for three years to design a low noise amplifier and an MIC hybrid power amplifier, as well as design and fabrication of Stripline Coupler and testing of its S-parameters using the Agilent 8510C Vector Network Analyzer.

- Publication of six technical papers, including presentation at the MTT Conference where I was struck by the similarity between Agilent’s display with a broadband free space measurement technique and those in the Tufts laboratory; and

Growing up in India and living internationally for most of my life, I am comfortable with cross-cultural teams. As a self-starter, I have come to Tufts University with a full scholarship for both my Bachelor’s and Master’s Degrees. I look forward to learning how I can combine these qualities with my technical skills to make a contribution at Agilent.

Thank you for your reviewing my background for this position. I will call you to follow-up in the next week. In the meantime, you can reach me at (email) or (phone number).

Sincerely,

Your Signature

Your Name
Dear Mr./Ms. Last Name,

I am writing to apply for the Investment Analyst position posted on your website. I graduated in May with a Master’s Degree in Economics from Tufts University, where I enrolled after two years of business experience. I have been researching John Hancock Financial Services, and I believe that I am a good match for your company and the position.

While studying at Tufts, I assisted with research on the early development of mortgages in the American colonial era. I collected and classified data from original documents, analyzed them using Stata, and built models using an econometric approach.

Before coming to Tufts, I was a security analyst at 263.COM Technology and Development Co., where I developed strong quantitative and analytical skills. I conducted technical and fundamental analysis on publicly traded companies in the Chinese stock market, drafted analytical reports, and published several articles in “China Security and Future Weekly,” a prominent finance journal in China.

Earlier in my career, while working at Wincor-Nixdorf Inc., I developed time management and multi-tasking skills in a fast-paced, challenging environment. My work as a sales representative has refined my communication skills, particularly in dealing with financial institutions.

I am confident that I could make an immediate contribution to John Hancock Financial Services by applying my strong motivation, professional skills, and related experience. I look forward to an interview with you. Thank you for considering me for your team.

Sincerely,

Your Signature

Your Name
DATE

Mr./Ms. First and Last Name
Title/Position
Employer Name
Street Address
City, State, Zip

Dear Mr./Ms. Last Name

I am writing to apply for the Corporate Finance Analyst position which is posted on Tufts Career Connect. I will graduate in May with an M.A. in Economics (3.9 GPA), internships with Morgan Stanley, BCG, and Alcatel-Shanghai Bell plus extensive research experience.

Based on my understanding of your position and your organization, here are the aspects of my background that seem most relevant to your requirements:

- Six years of rigorous training in Economics including a solid theoretical foundation, complemented with strong quantitative and analytical skills;
- Research experience, from financial modeling to in-depth analysis, based on projects involving health care and telecommunications industries;
- Communication skills developed through experience as a Teaching Assistant;
- Exposure to financial services as an intern at Morgan Stanley Dean Witter, where I worked closely with financial advisors and gained knowledge about the brokerage field and the interactions between retail and other sectors within an investment bank.

I look forward to the opportunity to discuss the Analyst position with you. Meanwhile, I can be reached at (email) or (phone) if you want to know more about me. Thank you for considering my request.

Sincerely,

Your Signature

Your Name
Dear Mr./Ms. Last Name,

A little over a year ago, one of the City of Portland’s professional planners came to Tufts University to speak about the changing face of regulatory takings and eminent domain use. (Name) spoke enthusiastically about how changing legislature is affecting Portland’s regional planning goals. We had an engaging discussion that confirmed my interest in moving to Oregon to work for the City of Portland. Since then, I have completed my Master’s in Urban and Environmental Policy and Planning at Tufts, as well as two internships in the planning and community development arenas. In addition, I have six years of work experience in higher education that has helped prepare me for a career in urban planning.

For five years as an employee at Tufts University, I have built an array of valuable skills in the professional world, particularly in the area of information technology. During this time, my experiences have contributed significantly to my growth as a leader and project manager. Most notably, I have engaged in the following projects:

- Designed and built a virtual tour of the Medford, MA Tufts University campus (http://vtour.admissions.tufts.edu/). As team leader for this task, I coordinated the efforts of several staff members and student interns to finish the project for the upcoming undergraduate admissions cycle.

- Built partnerships with local companies dedicated to recycling old computer equipment.

- Written technology standards and responsible computer use policies, and advised colleagues on how to gather qualitative data for effective evaluation of our service goals.

Perhaps the most valuable part of my work in the IT field has been the opportunity to see how technology is used pragmatically to overcome communication barriers among students, faculty, parents, and University administrators. From this experience I have also come to understand when technology is simply not an appropriate solution to a problem.

The Master’s program at Tufts prepares graduates for a wide range of work in the urban and environmental planning fields, and what separates Tufts from other programs is its dedication to the integration of two distinct fields. Oregon prides itself on protecting natural resources, particularly in their most urban areas, and the coursework at Tufts promotes a sense of harmony between city life and environmental preservation and protection. I feel this unique perspective makes me a good fit for Portland’s city planning department.

I would welcome an opportunity to discuss my qualifications and interests with you. I look forward to hearing from you at (phone) or (email).

Sincerely,

Your Signature

Your Name
Dear Mr./Ms. Last Name,

I am applying for a summer internship at Lockheed Martin. As a graduate student in engineering and a reader of Popular Science since childhood, I have always seen the Lockheed Martin name associated with aircraft, defense and other technological advancements. I had the opportunity to speak with a fellow Tufts student who was an intern last summer at Lockheed Martin. She described a rewarding experience working in Orlando and enjoyed the hands-on opportunities that were available to her.

Last summer I worked for a small research company, and I am currently working on a research project for the Tufts University Mechanical Engineering Department. Based on these experiences and interests, I hope to join you as an intern next summer and contribute the skills I have developed through my courses and internships. With this hands-on experience, I’m ready to move to a larger corporate structure and look forward to the learning opportunities offered at Lockheed Martin.

I am eager to discuss the possibility of an internship with you. If you have any questions or require any additional information, please contact me at (000) 000-0000 or name.name@tufts.edu.

Thank you for your consideration. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Your Signature

Your Name
Dear Mr./Ms. Last Name,

A strong interest in Design and Modeling has encouraged me to apply for your internship position at the Bose Design Center. As a candidate for a Master’s degree in Mechanical Engineering at Tufts University, I am prepared to contribute the skills I have acquired in my classes and research to your world class work in acoustics.

My thesis on analysis of Pinch and Roll process used to manufacture aircraft turbine and compressor blades, and a course project on Manufacturing Design and Cost Analysis of Turbine Disk, exposed me to manufacturing practices and familiarized me with solid modeling software like AutoCAD and Pro Engineer. I am confident that I can manage high level Design and Modeling projects., based on my solid understanding and use of FEM packages like Deform and Ansys, CAD tools like AutoCAD and Pro Engineer, and Mathematics based software MathCAD,

The rigor of my courses at Tufts coupled with projects and term paper presentations for my Masters program have developed my analytical aptitude and communication skills. In addition, as Vice President of Indian Society At Tufts, I have organized social and cultural events to promote appreciation of diversity and I have raised funds to provide scholarships for Indian students. These experiences demonstrate my organizational and management skills and ability to work well as part of a team.

I would like to discuss your internship opportunity with you at your convenience. I can be reached at (phone) or (email). Thank you for reviewing my credentials for this position.

Sincerely,

Your Signature

Your Name
Networking Correspondence ~ sample

Your Name
Your street address
City, State, Zip

DATE

Mr./Ms. First and Last Name
Employer Name
Street Address
City, State, Zip

Dear Ms/Mr Last Name,

I’m aware of Massachusetts Technology Leadership Council and your efforts on behalf of this region’s executives and economy. As a leader of the organization and an attorney developing the legal standards for digital signatures, you may be interested in a unique set of skills and knowledge that I can contribute to IT companies in New England.

I recently completed a Master’s program in computer science at Tufts University. Several of my papers relating to digital signature schemes have been published both in the U.S. and Japan. Besides the degree, I hold a M.S. degree in information science and a B.A. in Economics. Prior to attending Tufts University, I worked for an investment bank in Tokyo and New York for eight years. My business experience is in marketing as well as in system engineering.

My goal is to help IT companies in New England develop business in the Japanese Market. Would you it be possible to meet with you to discuss my career goal and how it relates to your organization?

I will contact you next week to see if your schedule permits such a meeting. In the meantime, if you would like to speak with me, I can be reached at (phone) or (email). I hope we can arrange a discussion.

Sincerely,

Your signature

Your Name
**Thank You Email ~ Following Interview for Job or Internship**

SUBJECT LINE: Interview Follow-up & Thanks

Dear Mr./Ms. Last Name,

I enjoyed meeting you yesterday and learning more about your research and design work at PEG. Thank for the opportunity to interview for your process engineer position. My conversations with you and with the engineering team have confirmed my interest in the position as well as the company.

My education and internship experiences have prepared me for this role, and I am eager to apply what I’ve learned to help with your upcoming projects. I hope there will be an opportunity to continue our discussions.

Sincerely,

Your Name

000.000.0000

**Letter of Acceptance**

Your Street Address
City, State, Zip
DATE

First and Last Name
Title/Position
Employer Name
Street Address
City, State, Zip

Dear Mr./Ms. Last Name,

Thank you for your offer of employment as a Field Analyst with FAST Systems. I am pleased to accept your position as (job title) and I have enclosed the Employee Application that you requested.

To confirm my understanding of the offer, I am to begin work in the Brighton office on (date), with annual compensation of $00,000 plus benefits.

I look forward to joining FAST Systems and to making a solid contribution to your work.

Sincerely,

Your Signature

Your Name