

CAREER TOOLKIT

Your Cover Letter, Step by Step

A simple way to build a cover letter that sounds like you

How to use this guide

Type into boxes on a computer or print it out and write out your answers by hand.

A cover letter is short — four paragraphs are plenty. This guide shows you a sample, then walks you through building your own.

Keep your resume nearby. Your cover letter should connect to it but not repeat it word for word.

Keep it consistent & save everything with the right filename

Use the exact same professional name on your cover letter, résumé, LinkedIn, and references — skip nicknames, and pick one version of your name to use everywhere. (Ex: Jane A. Smith, John Jones, Maria González)

Use the same clean, professional email address on every document, like firstname.lastname@gmail.com. Skip nicknames, numbers, and old addresses from when you were younger. You may have to create a new email.

Save two versions of this letter: a Word document (.docx) you keep editing, and a PDF you actually send when you apply — a PDF keeps your formatting locked in place (Hint: go to File > Save As > PDF).

Name your files clearly: FirstNameLastName_CoverLetter.docx and FirstNameLastName_CoverLetter.pdf.

BEFORE YOU START

1. Cover letter do's and don'ts

A cover letter tells the story behind your resume, in your own words. It's the opportunity to explain your unique skills and why you think you would be a good fit for the position. The cover letter should ***feel and sound like you***, just in a professional voice. The cover letter + resume = your job application, and both have one goal: to get you an interview.

DO	DON'T
✓ Keep it to one page — four short paragraphs is plenty	✗ Repeat your resume word for word
✓ Match the font and size you used on your resume	✗ Use a generic letter for every application without changing any details
✓ Write "Dear Mr. Smith" to a specific person or "Dear Hiring Manager" if you can't find a name	✗ Start with "To whom it may concern" if you can avoid it
✓ Name the actual job title and company in the first paragraph	✗ Write more than one page
✓ Connect 1–2 real examples from your experience to what the job needs	✗ Use overly formal or stiff language that doesn't sound like you
✓ End with a thank-you and ask for an interview to talk further	✗ Forget to update the company name if you're reusing a draft
✓ Proofread it, and read it out loud once	✗ Send it without proofreading

SEE IT IN ACTION

2. Sample cover letter

Here's what a finished cover letter can look like. Use it as a model for tone and structure — **not** something to copy word for word. The key takeaways here – concise letters are best, quantify your accomplishments when possible, and ask for the interview.

SAMPLE — SEE HOW IT ALL COMES TOGETHER (NEXT PAGE)

March 3, 2026

Jordan Rivera

jordan.rivera@email.com | (802) 555-0100

Green Mountain Outfitters
Brattleboro, VT

Dear Hiring Manager,

I am writing to express my interest in the Marketing Assistant position at Green Mountain Outfitters. I am currently a junior at Landmark College, majoring in Business Studies, and I am excited about the opportunity to contribute to your team.

Through my experience creating social media content for the Putney Community Food Shelf, I developed skills in event promotion, content creation, and volunteer coordination. For example, I helped increase attendance at our fall fundraiser by 30% through a targeted social media campaign. I am particularly drawn to this opportunity because I admire Green Mountain Outfitters' commitment to sustainable, community-based business.

I am an organized and creative person who enjoys connecting with people, and I am eager to bring my skills and enthusiasm to Green Mountain Outfitters. Thank you for your time and consideration. I would welcome the opportunity to discuss during an interview how I can contribute to your team.

Sincerely,

Jordan Rivera

NOW IT'S YOUR TURN

3. Build your cover letter

Fill in each part below in order. By the end, you'll have a complete first draft.

Step 1 — Your heading

This goes at the top of the page: today's date, your contact info, and the employer's info.

Today's date:

Your name:

Your phone:

Your email:

Company name:

City, State:

Step 2 — Greeting

Try to find the hiring manager's name (check the job posting or company website). If you can't, "Dear Hiring Manager" works fine.

Dear:

Step 3 — Opening paragraph

Say what job you're applying for and show you're genuinely interested.

Example: "I am writing to express my interest in the [Job Title] position at [Company Name]. I am currently a [year in school] at Landmark College, majoring in [major], and I am excited about the opportunity to contribute to your team."

Step 4 — Body paragraph

Connect your experience to the job. Pick 2–3 skills and give one real example.

Example: "Through my experience in [list relevant experience — coursework, job, internship, or activity], I have developed skills in [2–3 relevant skills]. For example, [give a brief example of something you did or accomplished]. I am particularly drawn to this opportunity because [1 sentence about why you're interested in the company or role]."

Step 5 — Closing paragraph

Add one more sentence about what you bring, then say thank you.

Example: "I am a [positive trait — motivated, organized, reliable, etc.] individual who enjoys [something relevant to the role], and I am eager to bring my skills and enthusiasm to [Company Name]. Thank you for your time and consideration. I would welcome the opportunity to discuss during an interview how I can contribute to your team."

Step 6 — Sign off

Sincerely,

Your full name:

Before you send it, check:

- ☐ Is it one page?
- ☐ Does it name the actual job title and company? (make sure it's not referring to another company!)
- ☐ Does the font match your resume?
- ☐ Did you proofread it — and read it out loud once?
- ☐ Show it to another person as a “reality check”— a friend, roommate, classmate, your advisor.
- ☐ Did you save it as a Word.docx and as a *pdf?

Keep going

Landmark College has additional resources to support your career journey.

Career Advisors can help you with career planning, coaching, providing more in-depth “how-to” advice and resources as you grow your professional skills for life after Landmark.

Where can you make an appointment with a Career Advisor? Right here at this link:

<https://www.landmark.edu/academics/career-services>