The Cover Letter

How to Write it,
How to Format it,
How to Send it

Purpose of Cover Letters
- Introduces your résumé
- Highlights your strengths related to the job.
- Gains an interview

How to write it
- Three primary parts
  - Opening
    - Gains attention
  - Body
    - Builds interest and reduces resistance
  - Closing
    - Motivates action
Quick Tip - Résumé

- To put an accent mark over the e
  - Turn on <Number Lock> keypad
  - Hold down <ALT>
  - On keypad type 130
  - Release <ALT>
- Alternative
  - Misspell resume
  - Choose résumé from the spell check list

Opening

- Address the individual by name
- Avoid boring openers:
  - Please consider this letter of application for...
  - I would like to apply for...
- Be specific in reference to source of information
- Specifically refer to job title and your qualifications.

Body

- Résumé tells what you have done.
- Cover letter tells what you can do.
- Tell the employer what you can do for the organization.
  - BAD: I have completed courses in business communication, technical writing, and nutrition.
  - GOOD: Courses in business communication, technical writing, and nutrition have prepared me for developing technical proposals in the field of pharmaceutical sales.
Body

- Choose your strongest qualifications and explain how they fit the targeted job.
  - You can even use classroom experience.
    - A feature article written in my Media Writing II class received second place in the National ACT Critique & Contest.
- Discuss relevant personal traits
  - Are you a team player, have you demonstrated initiative, or do you learn software easily?
- Refer the reader to your résumé
  - Additional information about my educational experience is detailed in the attached résumé.

Closing

- Ask for the action you want
  - You want an interview!
- Make it easy for the reader to agree
  - Supply a telephone number
  - Let them know when is best to call or
  - Let them know when you will call them.

Example

- Next week, after you have examined the attached résumé, I will call you to discuss the possibility of arranging an interview.
- I will be visiting the St Louis area during the week of January 5-9, please let me know if it is possible to meet with you during this time.
Format it

- Be professional
  - Use the same typeface throughout the letter
  - Match the paper to your résumé and envelope
  - Spell-check, spell-check, and spell-check!
  - Have someone else proofread it!
  - Use 1" margins
  - If creating letterhead-use restraint, the simpler the better.

Format it

- Dateline
  December 9, 2003
  - Start on line 13 or 1 line below letterhead
- Address line
  Dr. Tracy Rutherford
  Agricultural Journalism
  Department of Agricultural Education
  143 Scoates Hall
  Texas A&M University
  College Station, TX 77843-2116

Format it

- Salutation
  Dear Dr. Rutherford:
- Body
  - Use a block or modified block style
  - Block-no indents, everything on left margin
  - Modified block – date and closing lines begin at center
  - Very few business use indents in letters anymore.
Format it

- Body
  - Single space text
  - Double space between paragraphs
  - Use an 11 or 12 point font
  - Leave margins 1 to 1.5 inches depending on letter length
- Closing
  - Don't be cheesy
  - Sincerely or Thank you work every time

Send it

- Send the letter the day that you date it
  - Most items are date stamped when received, a long delay between your dateline and the date stamp can create a negative impression.
- Master the S-fold
  - Fold to the address line
  - Bend backwards so the letterhead and dateline are visible.
  - Insert into envelope with letterhead facing back.

Questions?
FYI

- Exams & Job descriptions are available to be picked up after class
- Final Exam: Wednesday, December 17
  8-10 a.m., Richardson 101
- 60 multiple choice or true/false questions and one essay question