



Conquering the Cover Letter: Easy Strategies

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If You Could Put Only 3 Things On Your Resume/CV, What Would They Be?

- EXPERIENCES
- ACHIEVEMENT
- SKILL



- i.e., Reviewed and analyzed 40,000 data items, and used R and Pivot Tables to classify and extrapolate patterns and draft results which were included in publication *The Food We Eat*, [citation in proper form].

The *dreaded* Cover Letter!

Why is it so feared???



Cover Letter News!



- ▶ Here's the Good News:
 - only $\frac{1}{2}$ the employers will read it!
- ▶ Here's the Not So Good News:
 - $\frac{1}{2}$ the employers will read it!

Pssst. Hey You! Here are the Main Ingredients for Cover Letter Success:

1. It needs to “look like” a CL
2. No typos, errors, fabrications
3. Identify/map employer needs
4. Weave job listing “keywords” through letter (to beat ATS) ideally in topic sentence of paras 2/3
5. Include at least 1-2 of items we identified earlier as what employer should know about you!



Q: How Can I Make It “Look Like” a Cover Letter?

➔ A: If it follows normal CL convention, you’re 1/3 there!:

1. 1 page (faculty position can be 2 pg.)
2. 3-4 paragraphs
3. Same font on resume and CL
4. Block style, left justified
5. Header matches resume
6. Date
7. Address of Employer
8. Salutation (Dear Ms. Johnson, or Dear Hiring Manager)

Format

Catherine Conservation

Kingston, RI (401) 874-2466 cmitnick@uri.edu

July 8, 2020

Jordan Morrisette
Manager, Corporate Administration
Tetra Tech
1234 Blackacre Avenue
Providence, RI 02906

Use Dr./Ms./Mr. then last name. Use “Ms.” not “Mrs.” Use first name if you prefer not to identify by gender, i.e., “Dear Jordan Morrisette” or “Dear Hiring Manager”

Dear Ms. Morrisette:

I am writing to express my interest in the management analyst position in the Washington DC office of Tetra Tech, listed on the company’s website (Job No. 1740000211). At Tetra Tech, I would be excited to use my Masters of Environmental Science and Management degree and my extensive data collection and analysis experience to support the company’s project teams in providing innovative solutions to client needs.

Note, left block paragraph set up

Advice and Samples:

1st paragraph:

- Do not begin with “My name is Sara Jones.”
- If networking or referred, mention it:

“Sally Smith, dean of students at URI, recommended I contact you. Dean Smith believes my experience as a writing instructor, my masters degree in creative writing and my highly rated teaching skills will allow me to make a positive and immediate contribution to the creative writing program at the University of Akron.”

Body:

- Ability to preserve confidentiality of information:
“While working as an enrollment specialist in URI’s Office of Financial Aid, I kept confidential records, and notes of conversations in a password protected file.”
- Accuracy and attention to detail:
“In all lab work, I used my critical thinking skills and attention to detail to solve complex issues such as _____.”
- Work effectively with diverse groups of people:
“While serving as a Conference Organizer for international students, I worked closely with visitors from around the world and introduced them to the university and referred them to resources. In addition, as a tutor in the College Readiness Program at Rhode Island College, I prepared students of color to excel on their exams and on their projects. The four students I tutored improved their test scores by two letter grades by the end of the semester.”

Sample Cover Letter – Environmental Analyst Consulting

Eric Environmental

Kingston, RI 401-555-1212 eenvironmental@uri.edu

December 5, 2019

Samantha Smith, President
GreenOrder Consulting
1313 Mockingbird Lane
Washington, DC 20005

Dear Ms. Smith,

I learned of GreenOrder when Beth Donaldson spoke about “Current Challenges to Biodiversity” at the University of Rhode Island’s Environment Day this fall. Since then, I have been very interested in GreenOrder’s interdisciplinary approach to using science to support and maintain biodiversity while helping clients achieve their goals. I was pleased to see you are accepting applications for a Monitoring and Biodiversity Manager. I believe my remote sensing and spatial analysis skills, combined with my 3+ years of social media experience, and my ability to collaborate easily with colleagues will allow me to excel in this role.

I have applied my remote sensing and spatial analysis skills in monitoring fish stock through GIS analysis and cartography using ArcGIS, and database development. I will complete a Master of Environmental Science and Management at URI with a specialization in Remote Sensing & Spatial Analysis in May 2020. In addition to my technical skills and strong grounding in biodiversity and conservation science, I have 2+ years of experience in drafting grants, including federal and state, $\frac{3}{4}$ of which were successfully awarded.

➤ **Your Name**

➤ City, State, ZIP Phone E-mail

Date

➤ Name of Contact Person, Title
Organization
Street Address
City, State ZIP

➤ Dear (Contact Person's Name):

➤ **Opening Paragraph: Why you are writing?**

- State why you are writing. Name the position for which you are applying.
- Mention the name of any referring person.
- **Briefly describe why you are suited for this particular position using keywords.**

➤ **Body of Letter: Sell yourself!**

- Briefly describe your skills, experiences, qualifications, achievements fit the job requirements and show you can **contribute immediately** to the project's success
- Insight on you as a person. Don't repeat resume. Mention personal qualities, special experiences

➤ **Closing Paragraph: Request an interview.**

- Directly, but politely, indicate your desire to further discuss your qualifications in an interview.
- Thank the person for their time and consideration.

➤ Sincerely,

➤ Your Signature

➤ Your typed name

➤ **Entry-Level Environmental Engineer** (NO-005-18)

➤ **Date:** 1/20/20

➤ **Job Locations:** Massachusetts - Norwood

➤ **XYZ GeoEnvironmental, Inc. (XYZ)** is currently seeking an Environmental Engineer to support our environmental remediation practice. The successful candidate will have a **solid educational background**, and must be self-motivated with a professional attitude.

➤ As an Environmental Engineer, you will work in a fast-paced team of Project Managers and Principals. **You will perform extensive fieldwork** and gain experience in drilling oversight, soil/groundwater/soil vapor sampling, monitoring well installations, air monitoring, remediation/construction oversight, and operation of remedial systems. You will also **prepare detailed and accurate field documentation, data analysis and reporting.**

➤ **[As a highly motivated masters degree candidate in _____ with extensive environmental fieldwork and oversight experience, I believe I can be an effective and positive contributor to the project teams at GZAEnvironmental, Inc.]**

➤ **Qualifications:**

- Bachelor's Degree in Environmental Engineering, **Environmental Science**, or Geology (**Master's Degree a plus**)
- 0-2 years of related **environmental experience** in the fields of site investigation, implementation of remedial alternatives, and/or design of remedial systems
- **Strong attention to detail with excellent analytical capabilities**
- Perform technical execution of projects under the supervision of project managers
- **Ability to follow direction, and work independently or in a team setting**
- **Strong communication skills, problem solving and organizational skills**
- Working knowledge of computers and Microsoft Office suite
- 40-hour OSHA HAZWOPER and FE/EIT certification a plus
- A valid driver's license in good standing

➤ **About GZA:**

➤ • Stable work environment, • Generous, company-subsidized benefits package

➤ GZA is an employee-owned multidisciplinary engineering consulting firm. We are an ENR Top 500 Design firm focused on geotechnical, environmental, water, ecological, and construction management services. With a staff of **interrelated professionals dedicated to providing high-level expertise on complex projects above, below and at ground-level**, GZA's experts provide **seamless integration across practice areas, client type, and location.**

Job Qualifications	Experience	Coursework/Projects	Degree or Credentials
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Solid Educational Background 			PhD – Env. Eng.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fieldwork • Documentation • Data Analysis and Reporting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Internship • Poster Presentation • Published article 		R/SPSS Certificate
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Experience with soil/groundwater 	Master's Thesis	Class project Course	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attention to detail • Organizational skill 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Editing • Categorizing species • Lab Manager 	Complimented for identifying & fixing coding error	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Team Member 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student Org. • 5 Person Lab 	Dissertation Project Manager	

Take aways:

- **Focus on employer's needs, not your own.** Ask yourself:
 - What is employer asking for? What have I done or studied to show I meet employer's qualifications?
 - What is concrete evidence of how **I can add value** and make their lives easier?
- Show your skills are **direct match** for job description. Use **concrete examples of how you meet employer's criteria. Focus on top 2-3 skills give examples of your positive impact.**
 - Share detailed examples of your fit for job's specific requirements. Don't just say, "I'm a good researcher."
 - Use active and concrete language and any objective approbation, i.e., "I traveled to Moscow and analyzed original source documents at Kremlin, identified a previously unearthed speech and was awarded top honors for research in my class"
- Mention relevant skills you developed (lab techniques, research jobs, volunteer or leadership positions, community service) Include relevant technical skills, languages, computer apps
- ▶ **Last sentence: tie back to what you can do for the employer**

CL for Post-Doc Position

Address your potential future employer properly:

- **Dear “Dr. (insert surname here).”** Don’t say, “Dear Sir/Madam” or “To Whom It May Concern” as your application could be dismissed as untailed for the position. Use principal investigator’s name.

Paragraph #1:

- **First sentence** -- Get right to the point — **“I am applying for the postdoctoral position available in your laboratory that was recently advertised (where).”**
- **Second sentence** – **give your current position, place of work and mentor.** If not immediately available (i.e., still need to defend), say when you can start.
- End with 1-2 concise sentences stating why you are ideal candidate (techniques or model systems).

Paragraph #2:

- **Elaborate on why PI should consider you for a postdoc in *his/her* lab. Customize letter and outline how your skills match or complement the PI’s. Use keywords identified in job description or from publications from PI’s lab. Be specific as to that PI’s work to make you look interested and show initiative.** Identify areas you want to learn from the PI’s lab. If you are good at writing/obtaining grants or other funding, say it.

Paragraph #3

- **Highlight a few key achievements** -- your most important paper or two, a grant or fellowship, or other notable honors (award-winning conference presentation). If you have experience training others in a technique, mention that. Keep it brief – you are highlighting what should be provided in your CV.

Paragraph #4

- Thank PI for taking the time to read your CV and for considering you for this position. Provide your contact information and state you look forward to hearing from him/her.

How PhD/MA Industry Cover Letters Are Different

WHAT SKILLS DOES THE EMPLOYER SEEK IN ITS AD?

- ▶ **For industry:** showcase “skill sets” and characteristics through examples. Play up skill sets: oral/written communication, teamwork, big data management, quantitative skills, project management, research, analysis. Less emphasis on academic credentials
 - ▶ **Non-profits, Education:** Speak to how your skills/experiences match their mission
 - ▶ **Finance, Business, Consulting:** Results-oriented, conservative, brief
 - ▶ **Journalism, Creative, Arts:** Make sure your writing style shines. Not overly flowery, but show passion.
- ▶ **For PhD Teaching** – lay out scholarly agenda & teaching qualifications. Highlight accomplishments, qualifications, skills, areas of expertise. Show potential scholar and ability to get grants if relevant



Body Paragraphs for PhDs for Academic Teaching/Researching Positions

- ▶ **For major research institutions:** stress interest in conducting research and elaborate on current research topics. Mention potential collaborations. Also, describe your dissertation.
- ▶ **For liberal arts/teaching colleges:** emphasize interest, commitment and experience teaching. Also, advising, participating in non-class activities, mentoring. Mention positive evaluations or comments, i.e., regularly rated 4.9/5 on teaching evaluations.
- ▶ Smaller departments at any school more concerned about the courses you can teach.



For Academia – Teaching/Research Positions

- ▶ **Letters generally longer, 1-1/2 pages; 7-8 paragraphs**
- ▶ **Four segments: intro; research; teaching; closing**
 - ▶ *If teaching institution, put teaching first*
- ▶ **Tone should be that of a potential colleague**
- ▶ **Come across as serious, interesting, scholarly, collegial, productive and professional**
- ▶ **Contain clear statement of your research and teaching interests**
- ▶ **Show a draft of your letter to your chair or advisor**



Academic Cover Letters



<https://www.unl.edu/gradstudies/current/development/writing-cover-letter-academic-position-0>

<https://icc.ucdavis.edu/mpp/academia/coverletter-template>

<https://www.chronicle.com/article/Your-CV-Should-Inform-Your/243881> (Read the second half of the article, which is about the cover letter)

https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/job_search_writing/job_search_letters/academic_cover_letters/academic_cover_letter_sample.html

Adeline Streudel

111 Douglas Avenue, Foster, RI 02222 401.111.1111 streudelteacher@email.com

April 1, 2020

Ms. Justine Principal
Gesu School
2045 Parkside Dr.
Gloucester, RI 02111

Dear Ms. Principal,

I write with great enthusiasm to apply for the special education teacher position listed on the school's website. Drawing from my experiences as a special education student teacher as part of my master's degree in special education, and my 5+ years of elementary school classroom teaching, I welcome the chance to begin the next phase my professional teaching career at Gesu. As highlighted on my enclosed resume, my academic achievement, related teaching and educational experience, and volunteer involvement demonstrate I possess the qualifications for this position.

During my student teaching experience I implemented lessons that were age appropriate, hands-on and individualized. I developed differentiated learning models for each student's ability. In the classroom, I constructed different centers for the children to explore, including a nature pavilion, a space odyssey and an alphabet adventure. In the nature pavilion, using specific adaptation methods, I created modified materials with pictures and incorporated these into the classroom.

A personal goal of mine is to provide my students with a stimulating, challenging, and healthy learning environment that will allow them to become active in their learning experience. In order to do that, I must also effectively communicate with students, faculty, parents, and administrators. As a teacher I developed a parent e-newsletter to help distribute information and collect feedback on homework assignments.

I am confident my education and experiences have prepared me to succeed as a special education teacher at Gesu. I am interested in meeting with you to discuss my qualifications for the position. Thank you for reviewing my credentials as a potential candidate and considering me for your teaching staff.

Sincerely,

Adeline Streudel