

## The "How-To" of Cover Letters

**Jane Doe**

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Dear XXXX, (insert the actual contact person's name here, or if not available, use "Search Committee, Hiring Manager, Internship Coordinator, etc."),

The heading of your cover letter should be the same heading as your resume.

### First Paragraph ¶ Is Where You Need to Stand Out the Most:

- ✓ Identify the position you are applying for or the purpose of the letter if it is a cold contact/internship opportunity.
- ✓ State where you saw the job/internship advertised.
- ✓ Answer the question "Why?" Why do you want this job? (Don't say just for the money.)
- ✓ Demonstrate your knowledge of the company by including a reference to the organization. By acknowledging their mission/reputation/accomplishments, you form a positive connection from the start.
- ✓ Relay your enthusiasm for the job.

### Second ¶ Should Talk Mostly about Your Experiences and How You Learned the Skills You Have:

- ✓ Give specific examples of how your **strongest** qualifications match the position requirements.
- ✓ Introduce and sell your relevant skills and experiences.
- ✓ Describe how you meet the needs of the employer by providing evidence of your related skills and experiences.
- ✓ Use short narrative examples and showcase how your skills and experiences are a match for the position.
- ✓ Reinforce qualifications presented in your resume by **showing, not telling**.

### Third ¶ Should Be Mostly about How Your Credentials Would Benefit the Position You're Applying For:

- ✓ Discuss how your experiences can translate into what you're applying for.
- ✓ Give specific examples of what you've done and how those experiences can be something you can bring to the company/organization.
- ✓ Talk about what the position offers you in building professionalism and necessary skills.

### Closing ¶ Is Your Last Chance to Make an Awesome Impression:

- ✓ One more sentence that highlights your credentials and interest in the position at hand.
- ✓ Thank the employer for their time and consideration given to your application
- ✓ Suggest a plan of action (request an interview, indicate follow-up in two weeks, etc.)

Best Regards,  
Your Name (Typed)

#### Formatting:

Cover letter should be a FULL one page long. Font should be 11-12pt, single-spaced. Margins should be 1" on all sides.

## Sample Job Posting and Sample Cover Letter

Boston Non-Profit Housing Association (BNHA) seeks a well-organized, self-motivated individual to help coordinate advocacy efforts as part of BNHA's regional work. BNHA is a 36-year old membership association that focuses government policy on housing solutions for low-income people who suffer disproportionately from the housing crisis, while promoting the preservation, development, and quality management of affordable housing. The Program Assistant will help pass policies and programs on the local and regional level that will support the development of affordable housing in Boston.

### Job Duties and Responsibilities

#### *Coordination and Advocacy*

- Help **schedule meetings, draft agendas, take notes, and circulate information** to the Housing Action Network.
- **Participate in meetings and discussions** with local advocacy groups to ensure connection between regional and local work.

#### *Organizing and Training*

- Assist in **coordinating regional trainings** on Inclusionary Housing, Community Acceptance, Housing Elements, and other local or regional housing efforts.
- Assist in **organizing** local support by doing **outreach** around sign-on letters or hearings.

#### *Qualifications*

- Required: Bachelor's degree in Gender Studies, Political Science, Sociology, or other related field
- Experience in either **organizing or campaign work** preferred.

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## Jane Doe

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Dear Hiring Manager,

It is with great enthusiasm that I apply for the Program Assistant position posted on the University of Massachusetts Amherst Career Services website. As a senior **Political Science major** at UMass Amherst, I have developed a sincere passion and personal interest in advocating for affordable housing for all. I feel that, with my experiences working at Springfield No One Leaves, along with a number of other experiences, I hope that I could be perceived as a strong candidate for this position.

Last summer, I had the opportunity to intern for Springfield No One Leaves, a non-profit organization dedicated to keeping immigrant families living safely in Springfield and providing legal help when necessary. At this position, I was exposed to a variety of **advocacy efforts** and **campaign work**. I also used my strong organizational skills to **schedule regional meetings, take notes**, and provide regular updates to the program directors. Additionally, I aided in **creating promotional publications** to provide to those that used our services.

I believe that having the opportunity to work as the Program Assistant at Boston Non-Profit Housing Association would provide me with necessary skills to continue my work in the non-profit and campaigning sectors, something that I can see myself diving more deeply into for a career. My ultimate dream would be to open my own non-profit, and I strongly believe that BNHA would be a wonderful starting point to learn how to do that.

Thank you so much for your time and consideration regarding my application. I look forward to speaking with you in the coming weeks to discuss my qualifications further.

Best,  
Jane Doe

UMassAmherst  
Central Career Services