Guide to Cover Letters
(And Other Professional Correspondence)

What is a Cover Letter?
✓ A sample of your written communication skills
✓ An introduction to a prospective employer
✓ In general, it outlines your interest in the position and company, specifies the skills you have, and gives one or two relevant experiences or examples.

How Do I Begin?
The cover letter should be brief (no more than one page). However, it should provide enough information to entice the recruiter to read your resume and give you an interview. Recruiters do not like standard, boring cover letters, so try to make yours stand out from the others. This guide will explain the general components of cover letters, but you should adapt your cover letters as needed to show that you are a qualified and unique candidate.

Two Types

Application (Bullet Style and Traditional Structure) – Samples, pages 4-5
Purpose: To apply for a position
Components: Expression of interest in the company
          Expansion on some areas of the resume
          Expression of interest in an interview
Suggestions: Although not all employers will require a cover letter, you should opt to submit one when possible. First of all, it will set you apart from other applicants who do not submit one. Secondly, it is a chance for you to expand on your resume with personal language—the employer will get to hear your unique voice. Finally, it is the perfect opportunity to showcase your writing ability, which is skill needed for most any profession.

Prospective Cover Letter (Bullet Style and Traditional Structure) – Samples, pages 6-7
Purpose: To inquire about possible job or intern openings (or to discuss the possibility of an internship)
Components: Expression of interest in the company
          Expansion on some areas of the resume
          Expression of interest in an interview
Suggestions: This is a letter of inquiry sent to a company that is not, to your knowledge, currently offering any jobs or internships. In the cover letter, you will ask if the company has any openings or if any can be arranged. Then go on to what you admire about the company and why you would like to work there.

Things to Include – Traditional Structure

FIRST PARAGRAPH (2-3 sentences)
State your reason for writing and how you learned of the opening. Capture the reader’s interest! Demonstrate your knowledge of the employer. Do some company research—look in newspapers, magazines, company literatures in the Career Resource area, Hoover’s (www.hoovers.com), on the internet, etc.
MIDDLE PARAGRAPH(S)
Mention why you are interested in the position and the company. Briefly describe your qualifications. If you are a recent graduate, explain how your academic background makes you a qualified candidate. If you have had practical work experience, point out your specific achievements or unique qualifications. Always refer and elaborate when possible on Education and Experience as it relates to the position.

Relate yourself to the company; explain why you are a good candidate. Be sure to refer to your resume but try not to repeat the same information as listed on your resume. Instead, elaborate on one or two positive, significant experiences or achievements.

You may want to refer to the position requirements and describe one or two qualifications or experiences in each area. For example, if the position requires group presentations and you have spoken in front of large groups, emphasize this information.

FINAL PARAGRAPH (2-3 sentences)
Do not suggest dates and/or times for interviews but note your availability at the convenience of the interviewer. It is also helpful to give a timeframe when you will follow-up with the recruiter – perhaps ten days to two weeks (it is critical that you do follow-up if you state that as your intention). Finally, close your letter with a statement that will encourage a response.

Things to Include – Bullet Style Structure

FIRST PARAGRAPH (2-3 sentences)
State your reason for writing and how you learned of the opening. Capture the reader’s interest! Demonstrate your knowledge of the employer. Do some company research—look in newspapers, magazines, company literature in the Career Resource area, Company LinkedIn page, Hoover’s (www.hoovers.com), on the internet, etc.

MIDDLE (4-6 bulleted statements)
Bulleted statements should represent your best qualifications for the position you are applying to or the best qualifications you possess in order to be considered for a prospective position or internship. While it may seem similar to your resume, cover letter bullet statements are more robust in their structure and only a select few are related on your cover letter (4-6 statements).

A key point to bullet statements is their composition without any references to “I”, “me”, “we”, “us” or, “they.” This is true for both cover letters and resumes. Avoid “I-statements” and keep the focus on the employer as well as your best qualifications.

FINAL PARAGRAPH (2-3 sentences)
Do not suggest dates and/or times for interviews but note your availability at the convenience of the interviewer. It is also helpful to give a timeframe when you will follow-up with the recruiter – perhaps ten days to two weeks (it is critical that you do follow-up if you state that as your intention). Finally, close your letter with a statement that will encourage a response.
A Few More Hints on Cover Letters

Bullet Style vs. Traditional Cover Letter
(Which one do I use?)

Selecting which cover letter style depends largely on what experiential content you have to express as well as which field or industry you intend to enter.

EXPERIENCE
If you have a good deal of direct or relevant experience in your field of interest, it would benefit you to write a qualifications cover letter. Students with more experience in their majors or career interests, either through internships, work, and/or activities, will be able to compose a thoughtful qualifications area. Remember to avoid “I-statements.”

INDUSTRY
Students entering fields where communication is a key factor (marketing, journalism, education, etc) a traditional cover letter would be more beneficial. A traditional cover letter allows you to properly demonstrate your writing skills and your ability to organize information, while elaborating on 2-3 major experiences you would like to relate to a prospective employer.

Pointers

• Address the letter to a specific individual. If you are not sure to whom to address it, contact the organization to find out the name of the hiring official, and his or her name and title (make sure to verify correct spelling). If a name is not available, address your letter to the position (for example: Dear Director or Dear Manager).

• Customize you letter for each employer. Mass-produced letters are easily detected and show a lack of sincere interest.

• The tone of the letter should always be positive and confident.

• Avoid negativity, boasting, exaggeration, insincerity, and inconsistency.

• Take time to demonstrate professional enthusiasm and creativity, but avoid statements like, “I’m dying to get a PR job.

How to Submit a Cover Letter

In most cases, you will either upload your cover letter to a website or email it to an employer along with your resume. However, if you are mailing it in, make sure that all of your documents are printed on the same paper and are held together by a paperclip—do not staple. Regardless of how you submit your letter and other documents, they should all have the same header, so that it is easy for the employer to keep all of your things together.
Sample Bullet Style Cover Letter – Application

Siegfried N. Roy
One Trinity Place #234 · San Antonio, TX 78212
(210) 234-5678 · Siegfried.Roy@Trinity.edu

September 8, 20XX

Lillian Lynx
Director of Personnel
Tiger Marketing Company
One Stadium Circle
San Antonio, Texas 78228

Dear Ms. Lynx:

In response to the Management/Sales Trainee position you posted on August XXth on Hire A Tiger, I am submitting my resume for your consideration. A review of the listed qualifications and experiences for this position closely matches my background.

Briefly, some of my qualifications include:
- Concentration in marketing allowed for in-depth coursework and project application in marketing analysis, consumer behavior, and product launch
- Campus and community involvement experiences with Trinity University Volunteer Action Committee (TUVAC) as Marketing Coordinator sharpened skills in communication and teamwork while carrying out marketing efforts on a limited budget
- Developed sales technique and customer service skills through retail sales position with Electronics, Etc.
- Gained knowledge and awareness of providing diverse customer services as student assistant with the Career Services office of Trinity University

I would appreciate the opportunity to speak with you regarding the Management/Sales Trainee position at your convenience. I will follow-up with you by telephone in two weeks. Should you have any questions, please contact me directly at (210) 234-5678. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Siegfried N. Roy

Enclosure: Resume
Dear Ms. Lynx:

In response to the Management/Sales Trainee position you posted on August XXth on Hire A Tiger, I would like to submit my resume for your consideration. I am confident my education and experiences have prepared me well for a position in a dynamic organization such as yours.

As you can see from the enclosed resume, I will be graduating in May from Trinity University with a degree in business administration with a concentration in marketing. My coursework for this major had helped me learn the basic principles, including sales, management and marketing. Moreover, my education has helped me sharpen the communication and teamwork skills necessary to be a manager with Tiger Marketing Company.

In addition, please note my experience in retail sales at Electronics, Etc. In this position, not only was I able to improve my sales technique and customer service skills, but also I learned how to work within a large retail environment. I have also spent much time at Trinity working on campus as a student assistant in Career Services. During this time, I learned the importance of building positive relationships with my co-workers, as well as meeting the daily challenge of providing exceptional customer service to our diverse constituents. I am confident these experiences have given me a solid foundation for a position with Tiger Marketing Company.

I would appreciate the opportunity to speak with you regarding the Management/Sales Trainee position. I will call you late next week to discuss this possibility, or you can reach me at (210) 234-5678. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Siegfried N. Roy

Enclosure: Resume
Sample Bullet Style Cover Letter – **Prospective**

Tai Guhr-Cubb  
One Trinity Place, # 456  
San Antonio, Texas 78212

February 2, 2016

Ms. Tiffany Cook  
Staffing Coordinator  
ESPN Plaza  
Bristol, CT 06010-9454

Dear Ms. Cook:

This letter is to inquire if ESPN is planning to offer summer internships or if one could be arranged. If so, you will find my resume attached for your consideration. I am confident that my education and experience qualify me for an internship with your company.

Some of my key strengths and academic achievements include:

- Accustomed to fast-paced environments where project deadlines are a priority
- Achieved a strong grounding of media and production principles as a Business Administration major with a concentration in communication
- Practical experience gained as current Associate Producer for the *Trinity Today* televised campus talk show: create edited segments, supervise the crew members, and run the standard Chiron text prompt generator
- Prior experience as a DJ for KRTU 91.7 FM, Trinity University’s noncommercial jazz station: took requests from listeners, introduced songs and read sponsored advertisements
- Understands the balance of multi-tasking and time management
- Welcomes challenges knowing that hard work will fulfill the day-to-day and larger scale objectives

I believe I can be of service to ESPN as an intern and would welcome the opportunity to interview with you. Thank you for your consideration of my materials. If you have any further questions, please contact me at 210-999-3210 or Tai.Guhr@trinity.edu.

Sincerely,

Tai Guhr-Cubb

Enclosure: Resume
Tai Guhr-Cubb
One Trinity Place, # 456
San Antonio, Texas 78212

February 2, 2016

Ms. Tiffany Cook
Staffing Coordinator
ESPN Plaza
Bristol, CT 06010-9454

Dear Ms. Cook:

I am writing to you to inquire if ESPN is planning to offer any summer internships this summer or if one can be arranged. If so, I have attached my resume for consideration. I am confident that my education and experience qualify me for an internship with your company.

While I believe I can be an asset to your company in a variety of areas, my strong interest lies in production. As a rising junior at Trinity University majoring in communication, I have the opportunity to study and apply the principles of media and production. In addition, I’ve had real-world experience at our campus television and radio stations. During my first year at Trinity I was a crew member for Trinity Today, a televised campus talk show. I had the opportunity to learn a variety of different positions and participate in the process of creating a live show twice a week. This year I am the Associate Producer for the show, and I assist in planning the show, creating edited segments, and supervising the crew members while also running the Chyron text generator. I also spent a semester as a DJ at KRTU 91.7 FM, Trinity’s noncommercial jazz station. I was on air for two hours every Wednesday afternoon taking requests, introducing songs, and reading underwriting advertisements.

I have been involved in this field since high school, and my interest in this area has only grown stronger. I took a Broadcast Journalism class as a junior and again as a senior. I learned the basics of lighting, filming, and editing a news show, and I spent much time on-camera as well, covering both announcements and sports. In high school I also began doing contact videography for special events, a practice I still maintain. I have taped, edited, and sold copies of plays, church cantatas, campus activities, and Relay for Life events.

I believe I can be of service to ESPN and would welcome the opportunity to interview with you. Thank you for your consideration of my credentials. If you have any further questions, please contact me at 210/999-3210 or Tai.Guhr@trinity.edu.

Sincerely,

Tai Guhr-Cubb

Enclosure: Resume
Additional Correspondence Letters

There are several types of correspondence letters in addition to prospect and application cover letters. Below are five types of written correspondence that are also important to the job process.

Introduction / Networking Email

Purpose: Outreach or network with a professional, acquaintance, or alumni who may be able to provide you with assistance in job shadowing, internships or employment.

Components: Basic introduction: name, class level, major, University name
Refer to how the individual was found (Hire A Tiger, Alumni network, LinkedIn, etc)
Briefly express intention or reason for outreaching in a clear manner
Express gratitude for consideration of correspondence
Offer your résumé only if appropriate

Suggestions: Do not be vague
A networking email should be short and direct

Thank You Notes

Purpose: To briefly express gratitude to an individual for an interview, reference letter, referral, etc.

Components: Expression of appreciation
Highlight of your qualifications for the position
Emphasis of continued interest in the position and employer
Commitment to a specified time to contact the employer for an update on the status of the position
Offer to provide any additional information not previously provided

Suggestions: Demonstrate enthusiasm without appearing overly eager
If interviewed by a search committee, be sure to get the names of all the committee members
Although gratitude may be an intimate emotion, keep letters to interviewers professional
This is a good time to briefly mention supplemental information that was missed during the interview
Be warm and personal
‘Thank You’ notes should be mailed the same day as the interview

Acceptance

Purpose: To officially accept an offer of employment

Components: Brief expression of appreciation for the offer
Reassurance of commitment to the employer/position
Confirmation of logistics (starting date, time, etc.)

Suggestions: Keep it short and simple

Withdrawal

Purpose: To express a discontinued interest in the position

Components: Statement of gratitude for consideration
Generalized explanation for the withdrawal

Suggestions: Detailed reasons for withdrawal are not necessary
Maintain a cordial tone

Rejection

Purpose: To express disinterest in an offer of employment

Components: Statement of appreciation for the offer
Generalized explanation for declining the offer

Suggestions: Maintain a cordial tone
Be professional
Sample Introduction or Networking Email

November 10, 2010

Marbella Monk
Vice President of Communications
San Antonio Sports Foundation
One Foundation Drive
San Antonio, Texas 78228

Dear Ms. Monk:

My name is Siegfried Roy, a graduating Senior from Trinity University, and I found you through the Alumni Directory. I see that you are the Vice President of Communications for the San Antonio Sports Foundation. As a Business Administration major with a concentration in marketing, I thought I might ask if you are available to discuss career advice as I am currently investigating opportunities in the field of communication and marketing. At your convenience, I would be happy to arrange a brief conversation in person or over the phone. Please call me at 210-000-9999 or email me at siegfried.roy@trinity.edu.

Sincerely,
Siegfried Roy

Sample Thank-You Letter (Letters are Preferred to Email)

Siegfried N. Roy
One Trinity Place #234 ∙ San Antonio, TX 78212
(210) 234-5678 ∙ Siegfried.Roy@Trinity.edu

November 12, 2010

Lillian Lynx
Director of Personnel
Tiger Marketing Company
One Stadium Circle
San Antonio, Texas 78228

Dear Ms. Lynx:

Thank you for taking time yesterday to discuss employment opportunities at Tiger Marketing Company. I enjoyed our discussion and the tour of your operations here in San Antonio. The Marketing Coordinator position with your company sounds like an ideal match for my education and skills. I was very impressed with the company literature and annual report you shared with me. It is clear you have an energetic staff that is dedicated to making your organization the fastest-growing marketing company in the Southwest.

I am available at your convenience and if I can provide any additional information in the meantime, please contact me at 210-234-5678. I look forward to the possibility of working with you.

Sincerely,

(Signature)

Siegfried N. Roy
Sample Acceptance Email / Letter

Siegfried N. Roy
One Trinity Place #234 · San Antonio, TX 78212
(210) 234-5678 · Siegfried.Roy@Trinity.edu

January 18, 2011

Lillian Lynx
Director of Personnel
Tiger Marketing Company
One Stadium Circle
San Antonio, Texas 78228

Dear Ms. Lynx:

This letter is a formal acceptance of the position you offered me last Friday in your marketing department. I am looking forward with excitement to joining you and your team in the near future.

According to the discussion we had, I will begin on Wednesday, September 15th at 7:30 a.m. My employment forms are complete, and I will return them to the human resources office by the end of this week.

Thank you for giving me this opportunity to work with the Tiger Marketing Company. I look forward to meeting the rest of the staff soon.

Sincerely,
Siegfried N. Roy

Sample Withdrawal Email / Letter

Benita Bengal
One Trinity Place # 789
San Antonio, Texas 78212

September 2, 2010

Kaleb Johnson, Director
Museum of Wild Cats
12345 Triggs Plaza, Suite 678
San Antonio, Texas 78228

Dear Mr. Johnson:

Thank you for considering me for this position. After much consideration, I have chosen to accept an offer with another employer; therefore, I must withdraw my application from consideration.

Thank you again for considering my candidacy. I hope that your search goes well and that you are able to find your ideal candidate for the position.

Sincerely,
Benita Bengal
Sample Rejection Email / Letter

Tina Tigress
One Trinity Place #123 ∙ San Antonio, TX 78212 ∙ (210) 999-1223 ∙ Tina.Tigress@Trinity.edu

August 21, 2005

Santiago Sanchez, Director of Human Resources
Puma Foundation
One Stadium Circle
San Antonio, Texas 78228

Dear Mr. Sanchez:

I enjoyed the opportunity to meet you and your staff during my interview last week. During the interview I was able to learn more about your office and obtain a better idea of what this position entailed.

I would also like to express my deep appreciation by your offer of employment with the Puma Foundation. Upon learning more about the position, I feel the opportunity would not be in line with my career goals at this time. After much consideration, I concluded that I must decline the offer.

I am hopeful that the person you hire will be a better match. Please do not hesitate to contact me regarding any questions. Thank you again for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Tina Tigress