

# Cover letter guide

## Job posting

- Carefully review each job posting, highlighting key words related to skills, knowledge and experience
- Remember: *Always* save or print a copy of each job posting you apply to, as you will need to review this before an interview

## Content

- Create a tailored cover letter for each job you apply to
- Your cover letter should emphasize your competencies (knowledge, skills, abilities), talents and accomplishments that make you the ideal candidate for that particular position
- Use variety in your sentence structure and use transition/linking words (found on the back page), to connect one idea to the next
- Review your cover letter for spelling and grammatical errors and consider having someone at the Career Services review your job search documents; book in for a ResumeTalk through CareerLink in the "Appointments" module

## Organization/Layout

- Keep your cover letter to one page and single spaced
- Your letter should include one introductory paragraph, one to two main body paragraphs and one closing paragraph
- Ensure that your contact information (including your name, address, telephone number and email address) is listed at the top of the page; other considerations include your LinkedIn profile and/or your personal website
- We recommend that you use a reference line (RE: ) to clearly indicate the purpose of the letter; this line can include the job title, location preferences and competition number or position inquiry
- It is very important to address your cover letter to a specific person or company rather than sending out a generic letter

## Formatting/Design

- If you are having trouble keeping your cover letter to one page, consider using narrower margins or choosing smaller line spacing
- Use a common font style (Calibri, Times New Roman, 11 or 12 point size), throughout your document, ensuring the font style chosen matches your resume or CV
- Be sure to include your electronic signature as this allows you to author your cover letter

## Social media and your job search

- Review all of your social media accounts and privacy settings
- Consider creating a LinkedIn profile which allows you to upload your resume content and connect with professionals locally and around the world

# Checklist



## Know yourself and your audience

- Can you comfortably articulate your values, knowledge, skills, abilities, experience and interests as they relate to job search documents?
- Did you perform an adequate amount of research on the prospective employer?

## Production and format

- Is your cover letter limited to one page?
- Did you use a reference line (RE:) to indicate which position you are applying for rather than stating the position in the first paragraph?
- Did you grab the reader's attention by explaining why their organization appeals to you in the first paragraph?
- If a particular person suggested you apply for the position, did you mention his or her name in the first paragraph?
- In the second paragraph, did you communicate your strengths and competencies as they relate to the job posting?

## Proofread and critique your letter

- Have you reviewed your document for spelling and grammar errors?
- Were you concise and to the point in your cover letter?
- Did you include your electronic signature?

## Sending your letter

- Did you create an original letter for each employer rather than sending a template cover letter
- When sending your letter electronically, did you attach your cover letter and resume as one PDF document, include a clear subject line and write a brief introductory message in the email body that references your attached document?
- Have you been keeping track of what positions and organizations you have applied to so that you can follow up with the employers you have sent correspondence to?

## Additional letters

- Within two days of an interview or meeting, did you send out thank you correspondence to the interviewer(s)?
- Have you written a letter of declination if you do not wish to accept a position that you've been offered?

## COVER LETTER

### (Advertised Job Posting)

Every resume should be accompanied by a cover letter. The primary purpose of the cover letter is to acquaint a prospective employer with your unique talents and skills as they relate to the job posting. Cover letters should be tailored to each job you are applying for and should include clear examples of how you've developed the skills required. Keep in mind your cover letter and resume are complementary documents and together should show the prospective employer why you would be a good fit for their organization.

Referencing the position here means that you do not have to repeat it in the first paragraph.

### Analyzing the job posting

Tailor your cover letter to the organization/industry you are applying to. Think of an organization's needs and link your skills and qualifications to those needs. Review the job posting, and the company website, to gain more information on the company and the work you would be doing.

To help you organize your thoughts prior to writing your cover letter, consider charting the position requirements and responsibilities on one side, and how you meet the qualifications for the position on the other.

Position responsibilities	Qualifications
Product design and development	hay baler design
Quality assurance standards	detail orientated
Interacting with various clients	liaison between
Overseeing project timelines	supervising 15 employees
Mechanical Engineer	16 month internship

ANITA CAREER  
Broke, SK  
306-555-1234  
abc123@mail.usask.ca

April 30, 2021

Debbie Reynolds  
Human Resources Manager  
Engineering Plus  
1000 – 100 Street East  
Saskatoon, SK S2P 9S1

Re: **Project Engineer #A875**

Dear Ms. Reynolds:

Engineering Plus is at the forefront of the manufacturing industry in Canada and prides itself on being a top leader of design in the automobile sector. Currently, I am in my final year of Mechanical Engineering at the University of Saskatchewan and would welcome the opportunity to work for your company full time, beginning May 2021, to further develop my skills in the areas of product design and development. I pride myself on being detailed oriented, which is imperative to meeting quality assurance standards and testing procedures.

I recently completed a 16 month Engineering Internship with an engineering firm in southern Saskatchewan, specializing in farm machinery. My role was to manage and oversee the design of an automated hay baler. Throughout this experience, I acted as a liaison between plant engineering personnel and equipment suppliers, preparing quotes and technical documents, gathering operational data for design purposes and coordinating production with a team of 15 employees. My strong leadership competencies, mathematical skills, and ability to meet deadlines and complete tasks unsupervised would be a valuable asset to Engineering Plus.

In my final year of university, not only will I be focused on my academic work, including a Capstone Design Project, I will also play an instrumental role on the University of Saskatchewan Space Design Team (USST). Our team of 25 students, representing three colleges, will go on to compete in both the University and European Rover Challenges.

You will find that I am a committed individual who takes pride in producing quality work, providing innovative solutions and communicating effectively with multiple stakeholders. I look forward to meeting you and your team to further discuss how my education and experience would be beneficial to Engineering Plus. You may reach me at the above telephone number or email address to arrange an interview.

Thank you for considering my application.

Sincerely,

Anita Career

Enclosures: Resume, Letters of Recommendation (3)

*The examples utilized within this guide are fictitious. No association with any real person, company, organization, product, e-mail address, place, or event is intended or should be inferred.*

#DontPlagiarize  
#BeUnique

Avoid using "To whom it may concern" or "Dear Sir/Madam." Addressing your letter to the "Hiring Committee", "Selection Committee", "<Company Name> Personnel" or "Human Resource Personnel" is more appropriate if the job posting does not indicate a specific person's name.

The first paragraph of the cover letter should align you with the prospective employer. Answer the following questions to convince the employer that they should keep reading.

1. What inspired you to apply to this organization? (Besides the fact that they have a vacant position!)
2. What makes your skill set, personality and experience background an asset to the company? How are you a unique, well-suited candidate?
3. In what way could you contribute to this specific organization's goals? (research their mission, vision and values)

Use transition/linking words to help guide the reader to understand the direction of your thought, from one significant idea to the next. (back page)

Communicate your competencies (knowledge, skills, abilities) and experiences as they relate to the job posting. Choose only the most relevant highlights from your resume and don't be afraid to utilize a cross-section of your life experiences.

#### Potential experiences:

- **Academic:** Class assignments, individual/group projects, study abroad, research, thesis
- **Work-integrated learning:** Experiential learning, community engaged learning, clinical placements, practicums, field-based instruction, internship, co-op placement
- **Work experience:** Paid, volunteer

Finish off with a strong conclusion by conveying your qualities that would be valuable to the employer.

## NETWORKING LETTER

### (Non-advertised job)

A networking letter is used when you are interested in applying to an organization that does not have an advertised position. Be sure to do your research on the organization that you are applying to so that you understand what they are about, what potential opportunities might exist and how you might be a good fit for their team. Your letter should include clear examples of how you've developed the skills and qualifications that would be of benefit to the organization.

Referencing the type of position here means that you do not have to repeat it in the first paragraph.

Avoid using "To whom it may concern" or "Dear Sir/Madam." Addressing your letter to the "Hiring Committee", "Selection Committee", "<Company Name> Personnel" or "Human Resource Personnel" is more appropriate if the job posting does not indicate a specific person's name.

Using transition/linking words help guide the reader to understand the direction of your thought, from one significant idea to the next.

ANITA CAREER  
Broke, SK  
306.555.1234  
abc123@mail.usask.ca

April 30, 2021

Mr. Joel Robinson, Senior Researcher  
Agri-Impact  
987 Bright Futures Avenue  
Regina, SK S5H 8G2

Re: **Agricultural Research and Field Testing Opportunities**

Dear Mr. Robinson:

As an industry leader in crop development, Agri-Impact is best known for sustainable and enhanced food quality. I had the opportunity to speak with you directly on September 19, 2020 at the University of Saskatchewan's Campus Career Expo, where it was mentioned that a number of opportunities are available for new graduates. As of May 2021, I will have obtained my Bachelor of Science in Agriculture, Crop Science, where I have honed my research skills and applied them to improving the quality and nutrition of crops. I am keen to transfer the knowledge, skills and abilities I have acquired within the crop science field to an entry-level position within your organization.

In my previous experience as a Research Assistant with NuGrowth Botanicals, I worked as a contributing member of the Crop Development Team. My role involved extensive fieldwork including seeding, spraying and harvesting of research plot trials. This experience highlights my ability to produce innovative and sustainable food production and, when complemented with my education, would be of high value to Agri-Impact.

As a participant in the College of Agriculture and Bioresources' Canadian Agri-Marketing Association (CAMA) Student Chapter, I will have the opportunity to develop additional skill sets relevant to Agri-Impact. For example, through collaborating with a team of five to compete at the 2020 National Agri-Marketing Association competition in Denver, I will refine my leadership skills; and through networking opportunities with local growers and agriculture-related businesses, I will further enhance my marketing and communication skills.

Through our conversation, I understand a wide variety of career opportunities are emerging as a result of the continued expansion of your progressive organization. I will contact you by telephone in the second week of October to ensure you have received my job search documents, as well as to enquire about possible employment within the company. Please feel free to contact me at 306.555.1234 to discuss my qualifications and interest in Agri-Impact. Thank you for your time and consideration. I look forward to speaking with you in the near future.

Best regards,

Anita Career

Enclosures: Resume

*The examples utilized within this guide are fictitious. No association with any real person, company, organization, product, e-mail address, place, or event is intended or should be inferred.*

#DontCopy  
#InYourOwnWords

If you have any personal contacts in the company or if a person referred you to the position or organization, this is the best place to mention them.

Referencing important details that your contact has mentioned about the position or organization shows your attention to detail, interest and commitment to learning about the prospective employer.

Communicate your competencies (knowledge, skills, abilities) and experiences as they relate to the type of position you are seeking. Choose only the most relevant highlights from your resume and don't be afraid to utilize a cross-section of your life experiences.

#### Potential experiences:

- **Academic:** Class assignments, individual/group projects, study abroad, research, thesis
- **Work-integrated learning:** Experiential learning, community engaged learning, clinical placements, practicums, field-based instruction, internship, co-op placement
- **Work experience:** Paid, volunteer

# Transition/Linking words

**Does your cover letter read well?** Does the reader understand the direction of your thoughts, and do your ideas connect well? Here are some transition/linking words that may help you to write how one significant idea moves onto the next. Employers who hire uSask students and alumni look to candidates that display career readiness competencies such as oral and written communication skills.

Addition/Add information				
Actually	And	Finally	Further	Not only this but also that
Additionally	As a matter of fact	For example	Likewise	Too
Again	As well	For instance	Moreover	
Along with	As well as	Indeed	Much less	
Also	Besides	In addition	Next	
Alternatively	Either (neither)	In fact	Nor	
Another	Equally important	Furthermore	Or	
Chronological/Sequence				
All of a sudden	As soon as	First and foremost	In a moment	To begin with
At first	At the same time	First of all	In due time	Without delay
As long as	At this instant	For a start	Initially	
At the present time	Currently	From time to time	In the meantime	
As long as	First/second/third	In addition	Occasionally	
Clarification				
In other words	For instance	mean	That is to say	To put it another way
Compare/Similarly				
As	Equally	In the same way	Likewise	
Also	In a like manner	Like	Similarly	
Concession				
Admittedly	But even so	Nevertheless		
Besides	Even though	On the other hand		
Conclude/Summarize				
As a result	In conclusion	Last	To sum up	
Finally	In summary	Therefore		
Conflict				
And yet	Conversely	On the other hand	When in fact	
But	However	Still	Whereas	
By way of contrast	In contrast	Through	While	
Consequence				
If not	If so	That being the case		
In that case	Otherwise	Under the circumstances		
Continuation				
After this	Before this	Next	Subsequently	
Afterwards	Eventually	Previously	Then	
Contrast				
Although	Even though	On the other hand	Still	
But	However	Otherwise	Yet	
Effect/Result				
Accordingly	Because	For/for this reason	Then	
As a result	Consequently	Hence	Therefore	
All things considered	Even so	In effect/effectively		

Emphasis					
Above all	Even more	In fact	To repeat		
Again	For this reason	More importantly	Truly		
Besides	Indeed	To emphasize			
Identification					
Namely	Specifically	That is to say	Thus		
Introduction					
As an illustrator	For example	Including	Such as		
By way of example	For instance	In particular	To illustrate		
Especially	For one thing	Notably			
Location					
Above	Away from	Beyond	Inside	Outside	
Across	Behind	By	Into	Over	
Against	Below	Down	Near	Throughout	
Along	Beneath	In back of	Off	To the right	
Among	Beside	In front of	Onto	Under	
Around	Between	In the middle	On top of		
Purpose					
For fear that	In the hope that	In order to	So that	With this intention	
For the purpose of	In order that	Lest	To the end that	With this in mind	
Reference					
As for this	Considering this	Regarding this	Speaking about		
Concerning this	On the subject	The fact that	With regards to		
Time					
About	By the time	Last	Meanwhile	Tomorrow	
After	During	Later	Presently	Until/until now	
Afterwards	Immediately	Now that	Quickly	When	
As soon as	Instantly	Once	Soon	Yesterday	
At	Finally	Next	Then		
Before	Formally	Next week	Today		
NACE'S CAREER READINESS COMPETENCIES*					
Communications (oral and written)					
<b>Articulate thoughts and ideas clearly and effectively in written and oral forms to people inside and outside the organization. The individual has public speaking skills; is able to express ideas to others; and can write/edit memos, letters, and complex technical reports clearly and effectively.</b>					
Advised	Contributed	Documented	Informed	Moderated	Published
Briefed	Cooperated	Drafted	Interpreted	Negotiated	Recruited
Clarified	Counselled	Edited	Lectured	Presented	Reported
Collaborated	Directed	Influenced	Mediated	Printed	Translated
*Adapted from the Career Readiness Materials developed by the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE).					

## CAREER SERVICES

G50, Lower Marquis Hall (below the bookstore) 97 Campus Drive  
 University of Saskatchewan  
 Saskatoon, SK, Canada S7N 4L3  
 Email: [career.services@usask.ca](mailto:career.services@usask.ca)  
 Tel: (306) 966-5003  
 Fax: (306) 966-5092



[careerservices.usask.ca](http://careerservices.usask.ca)

