

# COVER LETTER CHECKLIST



## Construction



### Spelling and Grammar

Spelling and grammatical mistakes demonstrate an inattention to details. Your cover letter will also serve as an example of your written communication skills, so your writing should be technically sound. Some common spelling and grammatical mistakes:

- Misspelled words that won't be caught by Spell Check (e.g. form/from) or missing words.
- Improper word choice (e.g. your/you're; there/their/they're).
- Lack of consistency or agreement of nouns and verbs.
- Ending a sentence with a preposition.
- Sequences that are not parallel (e.g. Wrong: For my birthday, I want a bicycle, a chocolate cake, and to go to the zoo. Correct: For my birthday, I want a bicycle, a chocolate cake, and a trip to the zoo).
- Missing commas or commas in excess – Watch for run-on sentences.



### Language - Formal vs. Informal

Most statements and cover letters call for formal language.

- Avoid slang, colloquialisms, or language that is too familiar (e.g. Wrong: Dear Bob; Correct: Dear Mr. Smith)
- Spell out acronyms the first time you use them (e.g. Student Engagement Center (SEC)).
- Don't write as you speak: No "like"!



### Word Choice – Repetitive Sentence Structure

Repetitive sentences can be boring and may lose the attention of the reader.

- Don't start every sentence with "I".
- Use a variety of sentence types (e.g. simple, compound, and complex).



### Readability

Your words should have logical flow.

- If you are writing about an experience in your professional life, it should have a beginning, middle, and end. Draw a map for the reader so he or she understands you and why you are applying.
- Always review for the awkwardness factor: It may have made sense when you were composing the sentence, but double and triple check that the sentence is clear to the reader.
- Don't leave much up to inference. You know yourself, but most likely the reader doesn't know you, so spell it out clearly!



## Content



Meeting the Requirements: Your potential employer has needs and requirements of applicants. If your cover letter does not convey that you meet those requirements, you won't pass the paper screening.

- Review the job description. Address the three most important requirements that you infer from the language of the job description. Provide solid examples as evidence that you have those necessary skills or meet those requirements. Emphasize your accomplishments. Data and numbers often provide evidence of successes.



### Demonstrating Your Interest in an Organization

It's important to share with your potential employer why you have chosen them.

- Refer to specific attributes of the organization or job that piqued your interest.
- The more research you do about the organization will make this task easier.
- Indicate how you can contribute to a specific project or initiative, or how you fill a need of the organization.