# Tips for Writing Successful Cover Letters

Your cover letter may make the difference between obtaining a job interview and having your resume ignored, so it makes good sense to devote the necessary time to writing effective cover letters.

1. What is a cover letter?
   - An introduction to your resume and qualifications.
     - Should complement, not duplicate, your resume. Purpose is to interpret the data-oriented, factual resume and add a personal touch.
   - Used by employers to determine your interest in the position and to assess your written communication skills.
   - Most importantly, along with the resume, a way to land an interview offer. It's often your earliest written contact with a potential employer, creating a critical first impression. Should intrigue the employer enough to read your attached resume and then want to personally meet you.
   - Should answer the following questions:
     - Why are you writing? Why are you interested in the job? Why are you qualified?

2. Be specific…
   - Don't be a "robo-writer" – cover letters should be individually tailored for each targeted position.
     - Should be addressed to a specific person by name and title.
     - Use job title and company name.
     - Use specific examples of why you're applying and why you'd be perfect for the job. Explain the reasons for your interest in the specific organization and identify your most relevant skills or experiences. Remember that relevance is determined by the employer's self-interest; the letter should express a high level of interest and knowledge about the specific position.
     - Reference anyone who told you about the job, or people you know who work at the company.
   - Don't be too personal – keep it pertinent.

3. …and brief.
   - Put yourself in the reader's shoes and imagine if you had to read 100 cover letters. What would make a letter stand out? What would you want to read? What would make you keep reading? Would you read more than one page?

4. General format:
   - First paragraph: Introduction
     - State the reason for the letter, the position you are applying for, and, if applicable, how you learned of the position.
   - Middle paragraphs: Information
     - What makes you perfect for the job? Include specific examples, highlights from your resume, etc. Pay close attention to the job description, even using similar language in your letter. Incorporate your knowledge of the company or organization based on research you've done – it shows your interest!
   - Last paragraph: Wrap-up
     - Thank them for their time and consideration. Mention that your resume is enclosed. Provide the best contact information for reaching you should they want to schedule an interview.

5. Visit the Hendrix College Office of Career Services for help getting started on your cover letter or reviewing a first draft. Schedule an appointment by calling 501-450-1440 or emailing careerservices@hendrix.edu.

# Elizabeth A. Dye

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To the hiring committee:

I am writing to express my interest in the position of Software Developer on the Data Analytics team at MITRE Corporation. I am a senior at Hendrix College, pursuing a double major in mathematics and computer science. I am extremely interested in working with the Data Analytics team, and believe my previous experience as an analyst intern at Acxiom Corporation, coursework, and professional experience would make me a valuable software developer.

I first heard about MITRE from a family member, and upon further research was impressed with the work your corporation does. MITRE's fostering of cultures of knowledge sharing and management are intriguing, and helped further solidify my desire to become a contributing member as a software developer.

As an analyst intern with Acxiom for approximately eight months, I learned many of the analytical skills that I believe are necessary to succeeding in the position of software developer. While at Acxiom, I learned the processes behind Map Reduce and used them in environments, such as Pig, Hadoop, and Python. I also gained a significant amount of experience writing multiprocessing scripts to comb through four billion data records. I also created and analyzed temporal maps of the data to help develop new customer tools, and alleviated noise in the data.

The courses I have taken, or will take before graduation, have also prepared me for the software developer role. Algorithms and Problem Solving Paradigms goes through several basic algorithms and their performance. The class was taught by a senior analyst at Acxiom, who provided real world applications and examples of the algorithms we discussed. From Scientific Computing, and Probability and Statistical Inference, I learned the basics of data analysis in a wide variety of formats, with technologies such as Python and SAS. I will continue to prepare myself for the position in the spring semester through Mathematical Models, which extends Scientific Computing, and provides a more mathematical basing, and in Database and Web Systems, in which I will gain experience with SQL.

Throughout my time as an undergraduate, I have been employed as Head Resident Assistant (previously Resident Assistant) and Intern in the Office of Admission. The internship required communicating with prospective families during all campus visit programs, presentations, and overseeing a group of approximately one hundred volunteers. As head resident assistant, I was required to respond to emergency situations, create programming for students, and help manage a staff of eight resident assistants. Through both positions, I learned the values of communication, time management, and leadership.

The culture of MITRE appears to do a wonderful job in not only welcoming, but encouraging, thought and idea sharing across platforms and projects. I would be honored to have the opportunity to become a member of the Data Analytics team at MITRE Corporation and become a contributor to such a culture.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,


Elizabeth A. Dye