COVER LETTER CHECKLIST

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What is a cover letter?
A cover letter is a way to introduce yourself and highlight your skills and fit specific to the opportunity to which you are applying.

Overall format:

- ☐ Concise, written in an active voice
- ☐ Single-space paragraphs without indents; double space between paragraphs
- ☐ At the top of the page include the same header from your resume
  - A header should include your name and contact information
- ☐ On the first line, include the organization's address block
  - The address block includes the hiring manager's name, organization, and address
- ☐ Try to address the letter to the person hiring (find it on the job posting, company website, or LinkedIn)
  - Avoid using "To whom it may concern:"
  - If you can't identify the person, some options include: hiring manager, hiring committee, or job title – Re: Data Analyst
- ☐ Free of spelling, grammar and formatting errors
- ☐ Use the same font as the resume
- ☐ Save as a .pdf with your name included in the file name

Opening paragraph:

- ☐ A strong opening paragraph includes the position you are applying for, how you learned about it, and key strengths
  - Think of this as a thesis statement setting up the flow for the rest of the letter
  - If you learned of the position by a connection to the employer, be sure to include their name

Body of the letter (1-3 paragraphs)

- ☐ Demonstrate interest in the employer
  - Find information in their mission statement, LinkedIn page, company website, through informational interviews with connections who work/have worked for the organization, or from the job description
  - Demonstrate you have researched the organization and know why you are excited about working there
  - Express clearly why you want ***this*** specific position and ***this*** specific organization
- ☐ Include examples of your accomplishments and successes to provide concrete evidence of your skills and abilities, use industry-specific language
- ☐ Avoid starting too many sentences with 'I'
- ☐ Do not use cliché phrases like 'proven track record', instead be specific about your skills and experience
- ☐ Explain why ***you*** are a good fit for ***this specific job***
  - ***Expand*** *on 2-3 of* your experiences, education, and skills that meet the qualifications specified in the job/internship description; map your skills to the position description
  - Express what benefits you would bring to the position if hired
- ☐ If applicable - include all information that was requested, such as availability date/job reference #

Closing paragraph

- ☐ Include a recap of why you want the position and are a good fit
- ☐ Include a way to contact you
- ☐ Thank the person for the opportunity to apply / reviewing your application

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Taylor Jones, Human Resources Director
The Smithsonian National Zoological Park
155 Connecticut Avenue
Washington, D.C. 12345

November 1, 20XX

Dear Taylor Jones:

If you know preferred gender you can use Ms./Mr. – if not, use person's full name. If name is not available, use a generic greeting such as "Dear Hiring Manager."

The first paragraph should clearly state the position you are applying for and introduce yourself as a candidate.

As a life-long visitor to the National Zoo, I am excited to apply for the Communications Coordinator position. Dr. Barbara King, Professor of Anthropology at William & Mary, informed me of this exciting opportunity. She has conducted research on gorillas at the National Zoo for five years and believed that this experience would fit well with my skills, interests, and goals. I am a firm believer in the educational and cultural value of the National Zoo, as well as the many programs enacted to engage with students in the community. My passion for the zoo, background in marketing for non-profits, and studies in anthropology and psychology give me a solid foundation to serve as a valuable asset to your team.

The body should include examples of relevant experiences that showcase your transferrable skills. Utilize the job description to focus on specific skills. Do not restate everything in your resume.

My experience as an event assistant at Heritage Humane Society gave me a first-hand perspective of the importance of connecting with the community. During my time there, I helped to coordinate and execute three major fundraising and community engagement events that brought in over 100 visitors each and amounted to over 30 new adoptions and $5,000 raised. I created a webpage that allowed visitors to digitally interact during the "Tails on the Trail" event by following a pre-set route at a local park, picking up virtual treats along the way, and submitting fun facts about their rescue animal. Lastly, I created profiles and wrote blog posts for over 25 animals up for adoption through our "Animal Camp" website, which encouraged the public to learn more about each animal and stop by for a visit. Creating these engaging opportunities for the community led to a 10% increase in donations over the three months I was in this role.

As a marketing intern with the Indianapolis Zoo I used creative storytelling to create a safari adventure guide tailored for elementary school children. To ensure the guide's effectiveness, I coordinated focus groups consisting of teachers, children, and parents and took all feedback into account. This project enhanced my ability to communicate with the public and create educational resources that enhanced the public's experience with the zoo. In addition, while managing the zoo's Instagram account, I took photos and video of the new panda exhibit and kept the public informed of their daily activities through Instagram live, reels, and stories. The coverage resulted in over 10,000 followers in only two months. As you seek to further expand the National Zoo's brand and reach on social media, my knowledge of Instagram and Tik Tok and past track record of creating engaging content showcases my ability to achieve this initiative.

I would be delighted to be considered for this role. As shown, my passion for animal education and conservation, marketing and communications experience, and creative abilities make me an excellent fit for this role. Should you have additional questions, please don't hesitate to contact me. Thank you for your time and consideration.

The conclusion should sum up why you are a good fit/interested in the job, an invitation to contact you, and include a thank you.

Sincerely,
Rebecca Greengold