

# COVER LETTER CHECKLIST

## Overall format:

- Concise, written in an active, not passive voice
- Avoid overly long paragraphs and academic asides
- Single-spaced, paragraphs are not indented; double space between paragraphs
- At the top of the page include your header, followed by the organization's address block
  - A header includes your name and contact information (resume); the employer's address block includes their name, organization, and address
- Try to address the letter to the person hiring (to find it try contacting HR, individual department, or LinkedIn)
  - Avoid using "To whom it may concern:"
  - If you can't identify the person, options include: hiring manager, hiring committee, Director of College Relations, use job title – Re: Data Analyst
- Colon, not comma, after the greeting
- Free of spelling, grammar, syntax 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, including position 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 the name

## Body of the letter (1-3 paragraphs)

- Demonstrate interest in the employer
  - Find information in their mission statement, LinkedIn page, through informational interviews with connections who work/have worked, for the organization, or from the job description
  - Demonstrate that you have researched the organization and know why you are excited about working there
- Use industry-specific language
- Include examples of your accomplishments and successes to provide concrete evidence of your skills and abilities
- Avoid starting too many sentences with 'I'
- Do not use worn-out phrases like 'proven track record'
- Explain **why** you are a good fit for **this specific job**
  - The cover letter is NOT a reiteration of the information on your resume
  - **Explain How** your experience, education, temperament meet the qualities specified in the job/internship description; map your skills to the position description
- Express how you would benefit the employer if you were hired
- Express clearly WHY you **want** this specific position with this specific organization
- Include all information that was **requested**, such as a job reference number, employment availability date and salary requirements (research salaries for the position and state in a range rather than a specific number)

## Closing paragraph

- Include an easy way for employers to contact you, such as a cell phone and email address
- Thank the person for the opportunity to apply/reviewing your application



**REBECCA GREENGOLD**

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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./Mrs./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.

I am very interested in the Communications Coordinator posting. 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 within my interests and goals. My studies in Anthropology and Psychology should give me a solid foundation to serve as a valuable asset to your team.

As a life-long visitor to the National Zoo, my involvement prompted my choice of academic major and several projects related to it. I am a firm believer in the educational and cultural value of the National Zoo, as well as the many programs the Zoo enacts to engage with students, especially in the D.C. public school system. This sustained interest in the Zoo’s mission and activities inspired me to submit my application.

My significant related experience demonstrates that I am an ideal fit for the Communications Coordinator position. As a marketing intern with the Indianapolis Zoo, I helped 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. This project enhanced my ability to communicate with the public and serve as a spokesperson for the Zoo. In managing the Zoo’s Instagram account, I took pictures of the new panda exhibit and kept the public informed of their daily activities. It resulted in over 10,000 followers in only two months. As you seek to further expand the National Zoo’s brand, my knowledge of Instagram, as well as Twitter and Snapchat, showcases my ability to achieve this initiative.

The body should include examples of relevant experiences that showcase your transferrable skills. Utilize the job description to focus on specific skills.

Finally, as a member of the William & Mary lacrosse team, I balanced the demanding schedule of a full academic course load, with team practices requiring over 25 hours a week, and regular travel, while graduating with a 3.4 GPA. As a result, I have the time-management and organizational skills required to prioritize and meet deadlines.

At your convenience, I would like to meet with you to further discuss my qualifications. Should you have additional questions, feel free to contact me. Thank you for your time and consideration. I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Sincerely,

Rebecca Greengold

The conclusion should sum up why you are a good fit/interested in the job, how they can contact you, and include a thank you.