

Dissected Dental Cover Letter

The intent of this resource is to serve as a basic structural writing guide for students to learn how to write a concise cover letter. Please note that before beginning any letter of intent or cover letter, it is essential to research an opportunity, otherwise you may not be able to make the most impactful and relevant arguments in your letter.

Ways to research a position include:

- using LinkedIn, Glassdoor, the organization's website, etc., to learn more about a company and/or its employees
- inviting someone in your network who is affiliated with the opportunity to coffee so you can learn more about their experience working there
- using UCSF Alumni resources, like UCSF Connect, to find someone who is, or has been affiliated with the opportunity, so you can invite them to coffee and learn more about their impressions and experience with regard to the organization

A straightforward cover letter includes about four to five paragraphs. Each paragraph in the sample letter is deconstructed below to illustrate how an applicant may write a cover letter for employment. Note that the rubric approach below is very formulaic in order to provide an easy-to-follow generic writing structure. Those who have excellent writing skills may choose to organize and write their letter in a different fashion according to their skill level and experiences. Regardless, each letter should be written in a way that is unique to the individual and their experiences.

Cover Letter Checklist

First Paragraph

- Did you address the hiring manager or program director by name?
- Did you include your academic training?
- Did you include how you learned of the position?
- Did you include which specific aspects of the position appeal to you most, based on specific and concrete professional goals?
- Did you mention 2-4 specific "superpowers" that you would contribute to that specific employer (e.g. **clinical experience**, **communication**, and **collaboration**)?

Body Paragraphs

- Did you include a transitional topic sentence for each paragraph that aligns with each of the superpowers you mentioned in the last sentence of your first paragraph (e.g. one paragraph about clinical skills, one paragraph about communication and teamwork, etc.)?
- In each paragraph, did you include 1-2 **examples** where you discuss your superpowers in action? (Remember not to repeat everything on your CV! *You should use a meaty example that provides more depth than your CV.*)
- Did you include a few sentences on what you **liked**, what you **learned**, and what you can **contribute** as a result? (**LLC**)

Final Paragraph

- Did you restate your thesis, i.e., summarize your three main **superpowers**?
- Did you mention something that excited you about the program, but in employer-focused language that emphasized how you could contribute?
- Did you express enthusiasm and signal interest in next steps?

Color-Coded Cover Letter Key

Now, let's take a look at a color-coded cover letter using the key below. As you read through, use the checklist above to note what the writer does well, as well as what they could add to make their cover letter even stronger. (Generally, cover letters should also include the address of the recipient and the date, but we have chosen to omit these within this sample.)

In this cover letter, we've included only two body paragraphs, but we encourage students to break out their third skill into its own body paragraph if they are not sure how to identify closely related skills and weave them together.

Color Key: **Superpower #1** / **Superpower #2** / **Superpower #3** / **Examples** / **LL**

Sample Color-Coded Cover Letter

Dear Dr. Tucci:

I am writing in response to Alum Dental Practice's (ADP) recently posted opportunity on the OCPD job board. ADP's mentoring and training programs appeal to me as a recent graduate of UCSF's DDS program. During my clinical training, and in particular, UCSF's simulated group practice model, I became incredibly efficient at completing procedures in general dentistry in a variety of practice set-ups and clinical settings. Through my experiences working with diverse patients, I gained **clinical experience**, **communication**, and **collaboration skills** that will help me to hit the ground running as a member of your team.

I was able to cultivate my **clinical** skills during my time at the Student Dental Clinic and specialty rotations. Through these experiences, I was exposed to a broad range of clinical concerns, as I saw patients for everything from cavities to root canals in collaboration with our residents. **In addition to quickly learning hand skills and the most common dental procedures, like filling cavities and taking impressions, I was also consistently recognized by colleagues for my attention to detail.** During a routine Periodontal examination, I noticed that the patient was wincing with pain whenever they would talk. Through further investigation, we found that there were problems with her temporomandibular joint and referred her to physical therapy immediately for pain relief. I also learned how to address the causes of advanced gum disease while becoming familiar with dental techniques in scaling and root planing, e.g. using an ultrasonic handpiece and removing plaque and calculus from the periodontium. Additionally, I partnered with my patients to help them understand the causes of gum disease, which led to eventual behavior changes on their part. **I enjoyed educating patients on preventive oral health measures and procedures, and my empowering style resulted in many repeat appointments. As a result of my diligence, I became efficient in working with diverse patients, from children to seniors. One of my goals as a new professional is to continue building my clinical knowledge while helping patients at ADP.**

In addition to developing my clinical skills, I was also able to build excellent **communication** and **collaboration** skills while working with diverse patients at the UCSF Dental Clinic. **Using my fluent Cantonese, I was able to translate complex procedural information to patients, which made them feel comfortable throughout their treatment.** For example, while working with a Cantonese-speaking client who had many questions about his treatment and costs, I carefully explained the reason for each part of his treatment plan and also negotiated the treatment timeline with him so that it aligned with his work schedule, and he could plan for the costs accordingly. In this role, I learned to address patients professionally and respectfully, discuss their concerns, and manage their frustrations with **empathy**. I was recognized for this ability by my preceptors. **Moreover, I worked closely with front-office team members to negotiate treatment and payment plans for this and other patients, all while efficiently managing a full caseload. In spite of altered timelines, I was able to readily balance both the patients' needs and the team's priorities so that everyone met their goals successfully. What I found most satisfying about this role was using my communication skills to build relationships with patients and team members. I would be excited by the opportunity to work collaboratively with the ADP team to provide care to your diverse patients.**

In summary, I would welcome the opportunity to use my **clinical**, **communication**, and **collaboration** skills with your patients and team. As a recent graduate, I would be enthusiastic about continuing to develop my skills in a community that values mentorship and sees a diversity of patients and concerns. Please do not hesitate to contact me at (123) 456-7890 or stanley.chan@ucsf.edu. Thank you for your consideration, and I look forward to discussing my qualifications with you further.

Best regards,
Stanley Chan