

# COVER LETTER/LETTER OF INTENT CHECKLIST

## FORMAT HEADING

- Is the correct return address information used on the top right hand corner of the page?
- Are the date, contact name, title, company name and address accurately and properly listed on the left hand side of the page? Addresses in the United States do not require "USA" after the state. Format below:

October 29, 2015

Mr. / Ms. First Name, Last Name  
Title

Company

Address 1

Address 2

City, State Zip Code

- Is the proper salutation used for the contact person? Be sure that all names are spelled correctly. Format below:

Dear Mr. / Ms. Last Name:

## CONTENT

- Does the writer indicate why s/he is interested in the position? The purpose of the letter should be explicit.
- Does the writer make a connection between the job description and his or her qualifications?
- Are only relevant jobs, skills, and experiences mentioned in the cover letter?
- Is the letter customized to the particular employer? Does the writer indicate what s/he likes about his particular employer?
- Does the writer avoid generalizations? The cover letter should reflect the writer's understanding of the unique characteristics of the target organization.
- Does the writer avoid the use of clichés or unsubstantiated claims such as "XYZ is the best firm in the ABC industry?"
- Is the cover letter free of jargon that is not universally understood?
- Does the writer spend too much time stating why the job would be great for him/her but not why he or she would be great for the job? What is in it for the employer?
- Is the letter too wordy? It should be concise and to the point.
- Does the cover letter briefly tell a story about the achievements rather than repeat the resume word for word?

## BODY

- Avoid using **bold**, *italics*, Initial or ALL CAPS randomly or excessively within the body of the letter.
- Does the introductory paragraph indicate why the applicant is writing? To differentiate your letter, consider using an introduction that focuses on professional interests rather than on your status as a student. For example: "From my perspective as..." or "Drawing on four years of experience in business development."
- The body of the cover letter is typically 3-5 paragraphs in total. Does the body of the letter contain cohesive paragraphs with appropriate transitions?

## CLOSING

- Does the student thank the contact? A statement such as "Attached is my resume for your review" is not necessary in the letter. "Enclosure" at the bottom of the letter is also not necessary.
- Is a proper closing included at the bottom, left hand-side of the page with a signature? For example: "Sincerely," or "Best Regards," may be used. A signature is not necessary if the document is sent via email. If an electronic signature is used, include a scanned version of your signature. Do not use a cursive style font as your signature.

## FONT

- Are the font sizes and styles consistent within the document (and between 10-12 font)? Is the font size consistent with the resume? Use a conservative font like Times New Roman.
- Avoid using bold randomly in the cover letter. It can be used to highlight headings if bullets are used.

## SPACING

- Are the top and bottom margins equal? Recommended margin is 1 inch.
- Is the spacing equally consistent between sections, lines, sentences, lists, words, etc.? Are the lines within the paragraph single-spaced? Are lines separating paragraphs double-spaced?
- Is the cover letter no longer than one page?

## NUMBERS

- Are numbers written properly and consistently?
- Numbers less than 10 should be written out in the document (for example, "four"). Write the currency values as: \$500,000, \$1,100,000 as \$1.1MM, and \$1,500,000,000 as \$1.5B. Write out the number if the number begins the sentence, for example, "Two experiments were conducted."

## PUNCTUATION AND GRAMMER

### COMMAS

- Are commas used properly in a series of words or phrases? Accepted usage example: The financing deal will include the land, the docks, and the lighthouse, which will be built. Without the comma before "and", it is not clear if the docks and the lighthouse need to be built. Whatever convention you adopt, be sure you are consistent throughout the document.

### DARE TO DASH?

- Are hyphenations used properly? Check the dictionary as usage varies over time, such as "nonprofit."
- Don't over hyphenate. If the word looks strange without a hyphen then use it! Agreed upon usage: So-led and Co-managed. It's OK to include the hyphen when referring to the year of the student (for example, "Second-year" is our preferred style).

### USE OF QUOTATIONS – BE SELECTIVE

- Hands-on (does not need to be in quotes).

### PERIODS

- Are periods consistently used throughout the document? It is recommended to close all bullet points and sentences with a period.

### TYPOS AND MISTAKES

- Is the cover letter free from typographical errors? Use spell check!
- Is the company name used in the salutation the same as the company name in the body of the letter?
- If acronyms are used, have they been identified or are they universally understood?

### USAGE

For consistency, we have adopted the following conventions. Please use these as a guideline:

- Website vs. web site – write as one word
- Internet vs. internet – capitalize the I – Internet
- U.S. vs. US – U.S. is proper; use US only when referring to dollars

### CAPITALIZE OR NOT CAPITALIZE

- Capitalizing the title is ok when you are referring to a specific title but not as one of many. For Example:
  - o Associate, Debit Capital Markets
  - o I was an associate at JP Morgan