Use this simple, step-by-step approach to developing cover letters that present your unique skills in a professional manner.

**Purpose of a Cover Letter**

- Highlights your education and experiences in a professional, business letter format.
- Markets yourself and shows the employer why you are qualified for the position.
- Communicates availability, qualifications, and interest to employers.
- Personalizes your resume by accenting strengths relating to the qualifications desired for the position.
- Serves as a formal letter of application.
- Demonstrates your writing skills.

**The Contents of a Cover Letter Must:**

- Capture the reader’s attention.
- Make the reader want to learn more about you.
- Explain your reason for interest in this particular job.
- Relate your strengths to the needs of the employer.

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Personalization
Do not address your letter to, “To whom it may Concern:"

State the position sought, organization name, and if appropriate, the geographic location.

Match your strengths and abilities to the organization’s specific needs.

Provide additional information and details which are not on your resume or expand upon your main selling point(s).

Length
One page, single spaced.

Three to four small to mid-sized paragraphs. Opening and closing paragraphs being smaller then the middle or body paragraphs.

Word Choice
Use positive words and/or action verbs capitalizing on your strengths.

Avoid repetition and, or non-descriptive words including “is,” “or,” “was”.

Do not abbreviate, or use unnecessary jargon.

Sentence Structure
Use concise, specific statements and short paragraphs.

Do not use inflated diction.

No more then 2 or 3 “I” sentences.

Use varied sentence structure.

Cover Letter Critique

Strengths
- Starts with a personal reference to make a connection.
- Provides details of skills in several areas of research.
- Includes the name of her mentor and the title of the research project.
- Demonstrates genuine interest in the field and the company.

Weakness:
- Closing paragraph is weak.
- Instead of asking employer to take the next step, author should take responsibility for contacting employer.

Elizabeth M. Thomas
emthoma@yale.com
700 College Drive, Waverly, PA 17062 • (570) 331-8937

May 27, 2008

March & Co.
Lisa Boekemeier
Assistant Director, Human Resources
P.O. Box 3
Sunbury, PA 17806

Dear Ms. Boekemeier:

Upon talking with an employee of yours from the Danville plant, LouAnn Eck, I am writing to inquire about current job opportunities available with your company at the West Point facility. I am a recent graduate of Lycoming College in Williamsport, PA with a major in chemistry and minor in marketing. Attention to detail, ability to work with others, experience, and motivation are the qualities of a good chemist. Throughout my college experience, I have used these skills and hope to continue using them working for your company.

This past summer, I assisted Dr. Charles Mather, Chairman of the Chemistry Department at Lycoming College, with the “Investigation and Synthesis of Early Transition Metal Compounds.” As a student in his lab, I conducted experiments, maintained the laboratory, performed research, and then presented my research to other faculty and students at Lycoming College. I also made use of many spectrophotometric instruments including the IR, NMR, GC-MS, and the UV-Vis.

The field of science has always sparked an interest within me, especially the area of pharmaceutical development and marketing. I am seeking a company that offers growth and advancement while also focusing on service and personal excellence. After reading your company’s mission statement, I feel that I possess the qualities to provide society with products to enhance the quality of life and satisfy customer needs.

Thank you for taking the time to review my credentials. I look forward to hearing from you to arrange a time to meet and discuss how I can be a benefit to March and Company, Inc.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth M. Thomas

Endorse: Resume and References

Personalizing your Cover Letter

Personalization lets the employer know that you have a sincere desire to work there and are responsive to their needs.

Personalization says you have taken the time to research the organization and the industry.

When you do not personalize, you blend in with everyone else!
## Cover Letter Elements

### Your Contact Information
(Top left or right)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Full Name</th>
<th>Address</th>
<th>Phone Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Using the same format as the contact information on your resume gives the cover letter a professional, uniform appearance. (See Page 8.)

### Prospective Employer’s Information
(Aligned with left margin)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Contact’s Full Name</th>
<th>Contact’s Exact Title</th>
<th>Contact’s Department</th>
<th>Name of Organization</th>
<th>Street Address</th>
<th>City, State, Zip</th>
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</thead>
</table>

### Salutation
(Double space below Contact information)

Use Official Title: (Mr., Ms., Mrs., Dr., Rev., etc.) and last name followed by a colon.

**Example:** Dr. Smith:

The standard way to open a business letter is with Dear, the person’s name (with or without a title), and a colon, like this:

**Dear Mr. Smith:**

State the purpose of the letter. Mention name of mutual friend. State your tip credentials. Name the position, department, and company. State source of lead.

### Middle Paragraph(s)

**Purpose:** Communicates main selling points, proves that your skills match employer’s needs, creates interests, and illustrates personality.

Point to achievements. Use action verbs. Offer proof of skills and abilities.

### Closing Paragraph

**Purpose:** Reemphasizes strengths and makes a request for further action.

State time line, specific follow-up information, and dates of availability.

Express appreciation for time, effort, and consideration.

### Signature
(Double space after closing)

Sincerely,

(Three spaces for signature)

Typed name
Enclosure: Resume, References, (etc.)

## Over Letter Critique

### Strengths:
- Communicates qualifications well.
- Relates strengths to the needs of the employer

### Weakness:
- The second paragraph is long and hard to read

  Writer should have broken the middle paragraph into two parts.

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*Alice A. Winters*
Lycoming College • 760 College Place • Williamsport, PA 17701
Phone: (570) 824-4614 • Email: msholes@lycoming.edu

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Ms. Sarah Rupert
Personnel Coordinator
Lycoming College, Bldg. 156
Williamsport, PA 17701

April 2, 2008

Dear Ms. Rupert:

After a personal meeting with Fred Spencer in the Office of Admissions, I would like to be considered for the position of Admissions Counselor. I feel that my experiences as a student at Lycoming College, my interpersonal and communication skills, and my ability to understand and motivate high school students would make me an excellent candidate for this position.

I have had the opportunity to study the dynamic combination of business and people with my double major in marketing and psychology. I have expanded my business education and experience by completing an internship abroad for Allen Press in Oxford, England. This position required self-motivation and enhanced my communications skills with people in all departments of the company. I was responsible for creating a survey and producing reports to provide insight on how to improve peoples’ skills and business-to-business relations.

As a Learning Consultant known for Panzio Management Consultants, I was responsible for assessing and communicating our clients’ interests in improving our property. My title’s high was my ability to interact and relate to them on a personal level. Additionally, I have learned to understand their thought processes at different stages of development as high school students. My commitment to campus activities has sharpened my communication, organization, and leadership capabilities.

As a campus leader, I have coordinated and led meetings and events and have developed strong presentation skills which have allowed me to feel comfortable and at ease speaking with and in front of others. I hope to take these experiences and abilities I’ve gained from my liberal arts education and use them to share and promote Lycoming College to prospective students.

I thank you for your time in considering my qualifications. I would appreciate an opportunity to personally discuss any qualifications and how they may contribute to Lycoming College. I can be reached at (570) 824-4614, and I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

*Alice A. Winters*

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A W
10 Tips for Creating Powerful Cover Letters

1. Address your letters to a specific individual with his or her correct title and address. (Note: this may take some research!)

2. Tailor your letter for each situation. Generic letters make little impact and have poor results.

3. Your letters should be employer-centered, not self-centered.

   Emphasis how you will contribute to the organization; give examples and specifics. Do not focus on how you want to gain skills or experience. Ask yourself, “How can I be of service to this organization?” And make those connections within the letter.

4. Show appreciation and consideration to the employer for reviewing your letter, resume, etc.

5. Make your letters easy to read, professional, and attractive.

   Effective cover letters can differ greatly in style, because no one style is clearly the “best” or most effective.” It is most effective to focus on the Content!

Cover Letter Critique

Strengths:
- Unique opening line captures attention and interest.
- The quality of the writing serves as proof of candidate’s communication skills.
- Demonstrates that the candidate has skills sought in the profession.

Weaknesses:
- Letter does not indicate candidates high level of academic achievement. Strong academic performance is sought in this field.
- The closing paragraph does not focus on the employers needs and what they will gain from hiring this candidate.

Nathalie L. Brumbohm
Lycoming College
Box 154
Williamsport, PA 17701

April 18, 2008

RE: Legal Secretary Position
Box E, The Daily Item
PO Box 807
Sunbury, PA 17801

Dear Hiring Manager:

    Francis Bacon said, “Reading maketh a full man, conference a ready man, and writing an exact man.” As a double major in Political Science and English Literature, I believe I have achieved the skills of reading critically, confronting and communicating with others, and writing to convey significant meaning with precision. I am writing in application for the Legal Secretary position posted in The Daily Item.

    I will graduate from Lycoming College in May 2008. As a double major in the humanities, I have taken many writing intensive courses that have helped me to hone my communication skills, especially in the area of writing. I have also been extensively involved in campus life as an active member of the Political Science Club, Young College Republicans, and the Lycomer (a completely student-run campus newspaper). Each of these has added in developing a well-rounded education.

    I am currently enrolled in a course entitled “Legal Research and Writing.” Through this course, I am learning extensively about many facets of legal work, including legal research in the areas of case law, statutory law, and constitutional law. I am also developing internet research skills using Westlaw and Lexis Nexis. The class requires students to prepare legal memos and contracts. Through the preparation of these documents, I have become comfortable working with legal publications, including Plunkett’s West, Shepard’s and various reporters such as the Atlantic Reporter and Supreme Court Reporter. This background will enable me to benefit you as a legal assistant.

    In summary, my critical reading, writing, and communication skills enable me to perform a wide variety of tasks. I am a fast learner and would appreciate the opportunity to learn more about the legal profession through your assistant.

    Sincerely,

    Nathalie L. Brumbohm

Enclosure: Resume and References
10 Tips for Creating Powerful Cover Letters (Cont’d)

6. Cover letter should compliment your resume, not be redundant of it. Do not rehash what is on your resume.

The resume provides your facts, the cover letter communicates your unique fit with the employer.

7. Being assertive works, being pretentious does not. Do not sound overbearing or describe yourself as the perfect candidate.

8. Avoid using definitive phrases such as, “My work is always Perfect,” or “I am never late.”

Definitive statements are rarely accurate.

9. Demonstrate genuine interest and enthusiasm for the job or company.

Companies seek individuals who are personally invested in their work and the field.

10. Do not sabotage yourself with negative self-information.

Example: “Despite the fact that I have minimal experience in the field….”

Try this approach, “As a mature young professional, I learn quickly and will bring a great deal of enthusiasm to the position.”

Andrew E. Jordan

Lycoming College Box 154 • Williamsport, PA 17701 • 570-321-4034 
jeordan@lycoming.edu

April 16, 2008

Mr. Suzanne Treadway
V.P. of Communications & Marketing
United Way of the Capital Region
One United Way
Harrisburg, PA 17110

Dear Mr. Treadway:

I am currently completing my senior year at Lycoming College in Williamsport, PA, where I am finishing a double major in psychology and business administration with a concentration in marketing. It is my goal to pursue an administrative career with a non-profit organization. A few months ago, I talked to Candis Matotola, a Lycoming College graduate working for The United Way of Lycoming County. I have since done some research and am very interested in pursuing a career with The United Way.

I have valuable volunteer and employment experiences that I feel would prove useful to The United Way. I would love to utilize the skills that I have gained through my education and other experiences to help people. At Lycoming College I maintained a grade point average of 3.2, while working an average of 10 hours per week and volunteering an average of 5 hours per week. As a student, I became involved in and then went on to coordinate a community service program called First Tee. The First Tee program is a highly successful program that provides mentoring services to troubled youth. I have also held a full-time job every summer since high school. I appreciate the value of hard work and am a very dedicated employee.

I would like to find out more about the possibility of a career with The United Way of the Capital Region. Upon graduation, I will be returning to the greater Harrisburg area and would appreciate the opportunity to speak with you regarding employment with The United Way. I will contact you shortly so that we might further discuss how I can be of service to The United Way. Thank you for your consideration. If you have any questions or are in need of additional information, I can be reached at (570)321-4034 until April 23 at and (717)321-4236 after that date.

Sincerely,
Andrew E. Jordan

Enclosure: Resume

Cover Letter Critique

Strengths:
▪ Identifies a personal reference from within the organization in the opening paragraph.

▪ Connects his academic work with personal interests.

▪ Provides proof of his desire and ability to work in a community service setting.

▪ The strong closing paragraph takes initiative to connect with the employer.

Weakness:
▪ Could have added additional information about accomplishments in the community Service setting.

Cover Letters Matter
A recent nationwide survey by Accountemps found that 60 percent of hiring executives believe that the cover letter is either as important or more critical than the resume.
Use Action Words When Possible

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Use Action Words When Possible

Active Sentence Structure

Use ACTION words and ACTIVE voice whenever possible.

Active structure creates excitement and is highly effective in communicating your message.

The MS Word Grammar Checker will identify passive sentences and provide alternative.

Cover Letter Critique

Strengths:
- Referring to Phone conversation holds readers interest.
- Bullet point list of strengths and talents is concise and eye catching.
- Listing accomplishment in retail sales proves that candidate can perform in the field.
- Great closing, suggests that a personal meeting is eminent and must be arranged.

Weakness:
- Positive results or accomplishments are very important in business and should have been noted in bulleted list.

Suzanne C. Knoff

700 College Place  •  Williamsport, PA 17701  •  570.331.4034  •  knoff@yahoo.com

Mr. Brendan Carpenter
Manager, College Recruiting
Kroger's
400 Fifth Avenue
Pittsburgh, PA 15219

March 6, 2008

Dear Mr. Carpenter:

I appreciate the time you spent with me on the phone on Friday, March 1, 2008. I found our conversation to be both informative and enjoyable. I would like to be considered for the position of Merchandising Executive Trainee, which was posted on your website on Tuesday, February 26, 2008. I believe that the combination of my educational background, experience in the variety of business environments, and strong work ethic qualify me for the position.

My strengths and talents include:
- Earned BS with a double major in Business Administration and Psychology
- Proven ability in retail sales
- Worked 40 hours a week while maintaining full-time student status
- Financed 100% of my education

Your position and my ability to work in various business environments complement each other. I have gained experience with retail sales through my employment with Clampa Sports. In that position, I reached sales goals as three of the four quarters in which I was employed. I have gained management and human relations experience through my internship at The A & W Sales Company. I am an extremely hard worker and believe my experience illustrates my ability to learn new concepts and assume complex responsibilities.

I appreciate your consideration of my credentials for the position of Merchandising Executive Trainee and look forward to an opportunity to meet personally with you. I will be in Pittsburgh from March 10-14 and would like to arrange a personal interview. If the inconvenience of your schedule requires additional information, please do not hesitate to contact me at 570.331.4034.

Sincerely,

Suzanne C. Knoff

Enclosure: Resume and References
To Increase the Quality of Your Writing:

- Give yourself time to write a good letter.
- Be creative in your first first draft and Then refine your writing in later drafts.
- Use an outline system to organize your thoughts before you begin writing.
- Avoid long sentences and hone out any unnecessary words.

Proofreading:
Misspellings, grammatical errors, and improper punctuation are unacceptable. Your final product must be perfect.

- Do not rely on electronic Spell Checkers.
- Check for grammar errors by reading your letter aloud.
- Check for spelling errors by reading the letter backward, one word at a time.
- Have someone else read and critique your letter.

Fresh eyes can more easily find simple mistakes. They can also provide constructive criticism of your writing.

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**Cover Letter Critique**

**Strengths:**
- Communicates personal strengths that match employer needs.
- Provided proof of his ability as a researcher through submission of articles.

**Weakness:**
- Does not provide support or proof of his “strong work ethic”

**Focus on the Employer**

The focus of the Cover Letter should be on the employer whenever possible. Concentrate on the employer’s needs. Tell an employer how you can effect their bottom line. Write about how you can increase profit, reduce cost, enhance their image, or retain customers.
Cover Letters should be included as part of a packet that includes a resume and reference list.

Uniform formatting and font style through the resume, cover letter, and reference list demonstrates attention to detail and projects a powerful image to an employer.

Use matching paper of good quality for resume, cover letters, reference lists, and envelopes.

Use 9 x 12 inch envelopes so the employer gets your resume and letter without any creases. They look better and are worth the minimal expense.