

## LETTER WRITING CHECKLIST

### OVERVIEW

The cover letter should consist of 3 or 4 short paragraphs that present relevant information in concise, straightforward text. Target the letter to a specific position, company, or industry. Use the cover letter to emphasize the most important information from the resume, add new information, and show how you match the requirements described in the job description.

**ATTENTION** (short opening paragraph of 2 or 3 sentences)

Choose an appropriate introductory paragraph or combine elements of these to create your own opening paragraph:

- Summary Opening – Present your strongest, most relevant qualifications (usually education for a student or recent graduate).
- Name Opening – Mention the name of a person who is well known to the reader and who has given you permission to use his or her name.
- Source Opening – Identify the source of your information (i.e., UTD CareerWorks).

**PROMOTION** (1 or 2 short paragraphs)

Present key qualifications for the job, including emphasizing some piece of information from the resume, adding relevant information that did not fit in the resume, and information demonstrating qualifications presented in the job description. Remember these must be short paragraphs, so be selective in what you present.

- Use a businesslike tone; eliminate boasting or exaggeration.
- Cite specific achievements and relevant activities.
- Demonstrate knowledge of the organization.
- Link education, experience, and personal qualities to the job requirements.

**ACTION** (short closing paragraph of 2 or 3 sentences)

- Request an interview.
- Restate phone number and/or e-mail address and the best time to reach you.
- Express appreciation for the interviewer's time and consideration.

### WRITING STYLE AND TONE

Word Choice

- Be concise and straightforward in wording.
- Use active verbs most of the time.
- Vary sentence length and structure to create interest.
- Use targeted topic sentences and strong transition words and phrases to effectively connect information for the reader.
- Check and recheck spelling, grammar, and punctuation.

Positive Emphasis

- Be positive in tone and wording.
- Avoid word choices with negative connotations.

Focus on Employer Needs

- Show how you will benefit the employer.
- Use more second-person (you, we) than first-person (I, me, my) pronouns.
- Use introductory phrases to avoid beginning too many sentences with I.

### THINGS TO REMEMBER

- Target the letter to a specific job, company, or industry.
- Preferable to address letter to a specific person by name.
- Demonstrate knowledge of the organization and the position.
- If faxing or mailing, sign the letter.
- Create an acceptable, professional business letter format.
- Read the letter out loud so you hear how it will sound to the interviewer.