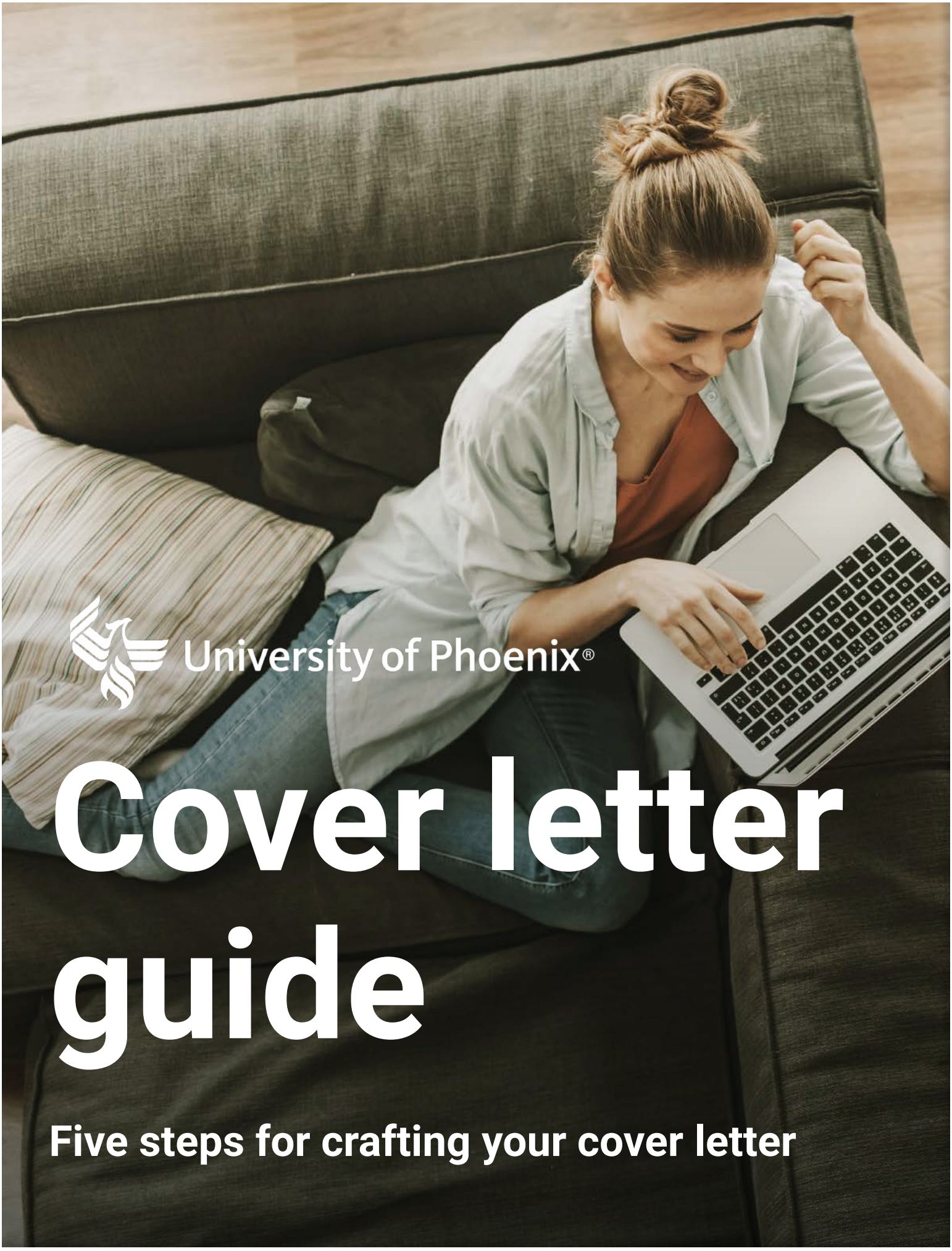

University of Phoenix®

Cover letter guide

Five steps for crafting your cover letter

Cover letters are more than an introduction to your resumé. They create a clearer picture of the person beyond the paper. A successful cover letter should convey what you bring to the table, highlight your accomplishments and express your humanity.

In this guide...

YOU'LL FIND FIVE STEPS FOR WRITING A COVER LETTER

1 **Cover letters vs. resumés**

2 **Identify your audience**

3 **Structure your storyline**

4 **Format your cover letter**

5 **Proofreading checklist**

1 Cover letters vs. resumés

TWO DOCUMENTS THAT CAN HELP GET YOU IN THE DOOR

A successful cover letter complements the information on your resumé without copying it directly. Think of it as a "director's cut" of your resumé; you want to explain the context behind your specific skills and achievements.

	Resumé	Cover letter
	Focuses on your multiple accomplishments in a concise and cohesive timeline	Highlights one or two relevant examples of where you excelled
	Should function as a stand-alone document with dates confirming what you mention in your cover letter	Should function as a stand-alone document that references the content of your resumé
	Lists the hard and soft skills you bring to the table	Focuses on the most important skills that matter to the company

2 Identify your audience

HOW TO POSITION YOURSELF AS A QUALIFIED CANDIDATE

Employers are often looking for a specific type of employee. Here's where you can find that info:

- Reading the job description
- Researching the company's mission, culture and goals
- Conducting your own informal interviews

Next, draw parallels between your research and your personal experience.

What knowledge and skills of yours align with the role?	Think back to a moment you performed a similar task required for the job.
What projects have you completed that are relevant to this role?	This can include coursework or applicable life experience.
Do you have a personal connection to the company or a current employee?	If the connection isn't directly related to the position, back-pocket it and mention it later on when you follow up.

TIP

You don't have to meet every requirement in the job description. If there's a line item that concerns you, you can bring it up in an email or later in your interview.

3 Structure your storyline

FORMATTING YOUR SKILLS TO A COVER LETTER FRAMEWORK

Cover letters, like all good stories, have a strong beginning, middle and end. Here's how you can structure a substantive and "skimmable" cover letter:

Heading	***Match the header you used for your resumé and emphasize your contact info.***
Greeting	**Address the letter to the specific company contact or to the hiring manager.**
Introduction paragraph	Start with an attention-getting opener that conveys why you'd like to work there. Then, tie your research of the company with what you can bring to the table. If you have a networking contact, weave it into your intro paragraph to help pique interest.
Main body paragraph(s)	This is the most important section of your cover letter. Here, identify two or three pieces of information you'll want to present and explain their relevance to the job requirements. Don't worry. We've collected a list of formats and examples for this section in **Step 4.**
Closing paragraph	Affirm your interest in the position and organization and then thank the employer for their consideration. Use confident language in the closing paragraph. You want to assure them of your knowledge and abilities.

4 Format your cover letter

SELECTING THE STRUCTURE TO HOUSE YOUR STRENGTHS

The format should be flexible enough that you can easily adapt it to meet the needs of each job you're applying for. **Click on the title of each format to read an example.**

Bullets

- Quickly address how you meet the job requirements
- Only mention the most relevant info
- Design it to be skimmed, focusing on the highlights

Paragraph format

Paragraphs let you explain in more detail about skills and experiences that frame you as an asset. Keep paragraphs short so they can be easily skimmed, and consider including bullets to break up long walls of text.

T-format

If you meet several of the job requirements, you might consider using a T-format to break down at least three, but no more than five, ways you fit the bill.

JOB REQUIREMENT (FROM JOB DESCRIPTION)	**HOW YOU'LL MEET IT** (REFERENCE AN EXAMPLE)
Experience with culturally diverse groups	Two years' experience working overseas in Asia

Email format

Many email cover letters are read on smartphones, so avoid long stretches of scrolling. Use short paragraphs and concise bullets to quickly convey your relevant strengths. Make sure to put the Job ID # in your subject line, sign off with your contact info, and attach your resumé before pressing send!

Letter of interest

A letter of interest is a cover letter that's not in direct response to an open job posting. Instead, it's a proactive approach that lets an organization know you're interested in a position there when and if one becomes available.

5 Proofreading checklist

WE MADE A LIST FOR YOU TO CHECK TWICE

Before hitting apply/send, double-check the following:

Your cover letter includes...

- Content that demonstrates a researched and informed perspective
- The exact job title or reference code (if available) in the header or introductory paragraph
- Experiences and skills directly related to the job requirements and description
- Consistent font sizes, headers and layouts that complement your resumé

Your cover letter excludes...

- Spelling and grammatical errors (especially any names you're addressing)
- Information of personal nature (e.g., marital status, children, disabilities)
- Any negative media coverage you may have read about the company
- Extraneous words that bury the points you're trying to make

Still need help?

OUR CONTINUED COMMITMENT TO CAREER SERVICES FOR LIFE™

At University of Phoenix, our commitment to you doesn't end at graduation. Whether you're actively pursuing a degree with us or graduated long ago, you'll have access to career advisors and resources — from your first class to your last job.

You'll get access to personal career coaching, including job search planning, resumé fine-tuning, interview prepping and more. See all of your options at **phoenix.edu/career-services.**

Dear Mr. Smith,

As the son of a retail store owner, I understand firsthand the challenges small business owners face managing day-to-day tasks while trying to drive growth. As a user of your software, Company X's marketing solutions have tripled revenue for our own family business. Now, I want to help other entrepreneurs succeed as your next Small Business Success Coach. Some key strengths I can bring to Company X include:

- **Proven Automation and Sales Pipeline Techniques:** Using Company X software, I've established automated follow-up emails, which increased sales leads and conversions by 120%.
- **Small Business Management:** As a production manager, I implemented a new operational structure combined with daily team meetings that increased production levels by 15%.
- **Relationship Building:** I genuinely enjoying getting to know customers beyond just meeting their needs as clients. In fact, 80% of our new commercial clients came through referrals.

Mr. Smith, I've witnessed how Company X's software can help small businesses succeed and welcome the opportunity to bring the same solutions to new and regular customers alike as your next Small Business Coach. I'm confident my experience can bring excellent value to your clients. I will follow up with you in a couple of weeks in hopes of scheduling a meeting.

Thank you very much for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Mike West

PARAGRAPH FORMAT | COVER LETTER EXAMPLES

Dear Mr. Wagers,

I'm writing to express my interest in the first-grade teacher position at Maricopa County Schools. Wendy Yates, a current fourth-grade teacher at Crockett Elementary School, suggested I apply based on my experience as a substitute teacher with MCS and my recently earned Elementary Education Certification. I'm excited to potentially teach first-grade students and instill within them a love of learning.

In the past few years, I've achieved my Bachelor of Science degree in Education/Elementary Teacher Education, which has given me a strong understanding of the diversity of student needs, best practices for managing conflict, motivating students and using technology to enhance learning. I've put that knowledge into practice as a student teacher and substitute teacher.

Additionally, working with kindergarten to fifth graders has helped strengthen my understanding of student development, allowing me to optimize learning environments for each classroom. Every student is capable of learning if they are in an environment that fits their needs. I'm confident I can provide that to your first-grade students.

I'm ready to take the next step in my career as an elementary school teacher, and believe my background, love of learning and desire to help students succeed would make me an asset to your school.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Hannah Bryant

T-FORMAT | COVER LETTER EXAMPLES

Dear Acme Inc. Hiring Committee,

I am enthusiastically applying for your (job title). I know I would be an asset to (department name) since I've devoted my education and work experience to (list your values and how they align with the position...)

My previous professional experience and (degree title) aligns well with the requirements for this position. Additionally, my (2-3 strengths) would contribute to a culture that thrives on employees working together to achieve unified goals. While my attached resumé details my experience, here are a few highlights.

Your requirements	**My qualifications**
Bachelor's degree	Bachelor's in Business with MBA in progress
Microsoft Office & CRM	Microsoft Office & CRM Microsoft Office, Word, Excel and CRM with a talent for learning new software quickly
Experience with diverse groups	Two years of experience working overseas in Asia
Customer service and oral presentations	Retail Customer Service and Toastmasters award-winning presenter

Thank you for your consideration. I look forward to speaking with you and learning how I can contribute to your organization.

Sincerely,
Jessica Hernandez

EMAIL | COVER LETTER EXAMPLES

SUBJECT LINE: Small Business Success Coach (Job ID 1103), Resumé of Mike West

Dear Mr. Smith,

Your ad for a Small Business Success Coach is an excellent match for my professional background and personal experience using Company X software in a small business environment. I have achieved the following:

- Used Company X software to create an AEM campaign that increased sales leads and conversions by 120%
- Managed a small business for five years and implemented a new operational structure that returned the business to profitability
- Produced 80% of all new business through word-of-mouth referrals due to outstanding account management and relationship building skills

I've attached my resumé, which outlines my qualifications in greater detail. I'm confident that I would be an asset to your team and welcome the possibility of discussing my qualifications further. I look forward to speaking with you and will follow up in a few weeks.

Sincerely,
Mike West

Dear Hiring Manager,

As a top-performing sales professional with a record of exceeding sales, profit, and market-share goals, I want to bring my expertise in media sales to ABC Sales Inc. Some of my notable accomplishments include:

- Grew sales revenues 5X in one year, averaging 65% annual growth
- Secured $400K in digital ad revenue in six months despite unfavorable market conditions
- Landed key accounts for a new e-marketing firm that included Macy's, Nordstrom and H&M

This is the kind of value I can offer to ABC Sales Inc. and I'm hoping you're in the market for a candidate with my background and expertise.

I'd be happy to further discuss how I can strengthen and support your team in achieving its long-term goals. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Jason Griffin