



HUSSMAN SCHOOL  
OF JOURNALISM AND MEDIA

# COVER LETTER GUIDE

***START  
HERE / NEVER  
STOP***

# COVER LETTER GUIDE

## OVERVIEW

If your resume is just a snapshot into you and your work experience, your cover letter is the whole picture.

The cover letter is your opportunity to tell your story. To show a little bit more of your personality. To add color to those bullet points listed on your resume. Your cover letter will really paint the picture of who you are, what you've done and why you are the absolute perfect fit for the job or internship (yes, feel free to be that confident in yourself when you're writing!)

While this guide offers general advice and tips for mastering the art of the cover letter, your story is what will make it stand out. Try to focus less on making it perfect, and more on making it real.

**The goal of the cover letter is to help the hiring manager see more of you as a person, not just a candidate. Let's start writing!**

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# HEADING & INTRO

## HEADING - WHAT'S THE POINT?

A well formatted heading emphasizes your professionalism and makes a cover letter look polished. While it may not be the most important part of the letter, caring about the details is what will set you apart from other candidates

## WHAT TO KNOW ABOUT THE HEADING

- Address the letter to someone specific, or leave it out. "Dear Hiring Manager" can feel impersonal, and it's not the end of the world if there's no salutation.
- Either use the heading on your resume for personal brand consistency, or address your cover letter to the company and include your return address. This would go in the upper left corner, formatted as so:

**Your Name**

**Your Street Address**

**City, State, Zip**

**Date**

**Name of Company**

**Street Address**

**City, State, Zip**

# HEADING & INTRO

## INTRO - WHAT'S THE POINT?

The introduction is when you grab the reader's attention and make sure they keep reading. While the rest of your cover letter will be more informational and experience focused, this is where they'll see your personality the most. This is the paragraph that sets the tone, and the goal is to hook them immediately. This is where you pull them in, but your experience is the real meat of the cover letter.

## WHAT TO KNOW ABOUT THE INTRO

- Your opening sentence is the most important part of your letter. Give them something enticing to read that will make them want to know more about you, your background, and why you would be a good fit for the job.
- Start by telling a story that somehow ties in your experiences with the company or the job/internship opportunity. It might feel random to begin with an anecdote, but we suggest your first draft be as casual as possible. Let loose first, then things can be tightened up.
- If you don't have a hook or are having a hard time with an anecdote, stay simple. Consider starting with “I want to be a summer public relations intern at [COMPANYNAME].”
- Keep it light and keep it brief. Your intro isn't the time to launch into your experience and job qualifications. After you tell your story, it's time to move to the body paragraph.

# HEADING & INTRO

## EXAMPLE 1:

I'm scared of the outdoors. I never went camping growing up, and I prefer a car alarm outside my window to the sounds of crickets or a crackling fire underneath the stars. I'm so nature averse that I almost opted out of a Catskills camping trip last year, that is until I read Hannah Singleton's story in *SELF*, titled "These Camping Tips for Beginners Will Help You Eat, Sleep, and Poop in the Great Outdoors." I consumed every detail, suggestion and recommendation, and because I felt less anxious and more empowered, actually said yes to the trip. It rained the entire time and I barely slept, but I had done it... because of *SELF*. I've relied on *SELF* countless times as a reader, which makes me thrilled to apply for the role of editorial assistant.

## EXAMPLE 2:

This past June, under the cool relief of a palapa in Morelos, Mexico, I listened closely to the words of investigative journalists from Sinaloa and Oaxaca as they discussed ways to safely report and write stories of corruption, injustice and oversight. Supported by a research grant, I had flown to Mexico in pursuit of understanding these journalists: how and why they pursue reporting in the most dangerous country in the world to do so.

Though I left my nearly two months in Mexico City with what seemed like more questions than answers, I mined an untold story. Beneath the searing headlines declaring the deaths of one Mexican journalist after another, I sensed hope. My conversations with journalists, NGOs, lawyers and professors revealed that even in a deadly press climate, Mexican journalists have risen by professionalizing and collectivizing in ways that have improved the quality of journalism produced.

## EXAMPLE 3:

When my friend slipped back into her native Singapore accent while filming a project for my digital storytelling class, I had an epiphany. That moment opened my eyes to the impact visual storytelling had in empowering people to speak their truth.

Taking Digital Storytelling last semester was the fire in my belly to pursue content creation. My experiences from that class have helped me redefine my purpose as a content creator by improving my directing, producing, and editing skills.

# BODY PARAGRAPH

## BODY PARAGRAPH - WHAT'S THE POINT?

The body paragraph is when you begin to incorporate your personal experience... but don't drop the storytelling. Try not to spit back out the bullet points they've already seen on your resume; instead, bring them to life.

## WHAT TO KNOW ABOUT THE BODY PARAGRAPH

- Make your experiences match what they're looking for. Take some time to review the responsibilities listed on the job or internship posting, and pick out your own personal work experiences that are the most similar.
- The whole point of the body paragraph is to show how you are qualified for the position. Demonstrating that you already conduct the required responsibilities proves that you are an excellent candidate.
- It's okay to leave things out. Some of your experiences will just be interview talking points. Only the most relevant belong in the cover letter.
- This should be the longest paragraph of your letter. Continue to reference back to the job or company, and keep it specific!

# BODY PARAGRAPH

## EXAMPLE 1:

My most recent internship with *Real Simple* taught me what I believe to be an editorial assistant's most important responsibility: make the editors' lives easier. I learned this from working closely with the fashion director in all things photo shoots when she was unable to make it to the office - packing trunks, coordinating messengers, assisting the stylists at shoots and acting as the point person for brands when it came to sample trafficking. Having to be in touch with multiple brands at once *and* the fashion director meant I had to prioritize communication; I could not have done the job without that skill. I also worked with our beauty team, growing my passion for beauty while learning the importance of organization as I maintained and implemented new systems in the beauty closet. I sat in on print production meetings, listening attentively and actively weighing in during the creation of the *Real Simple* gift guide. Brand outreach, photo shoot assistance and being an active participant and listener in meetings are skills I gained at *Real Simple* and will wholeheartedly deliver in a potential career at *SELF*.

## EXAMPLE 2:

The Texas Tribune shares my commitment to really understanding the implications of an issue, beyond the impact of breaking coverage. I find its clever reporting positions the facts to stand for themselves, while leading the reader to understand the consequences of these facts. Most recently, I loved the strategic coverage of the 1836 Project, which sourced historians as a way to explore the soundness of what will be a widely distributed educational narrative, which has the power to misinform many Texans. The story carefully approached a contentious national issue but left room for conflicted readers to digest the fibers of fact. This goal must underpin any outlet without a paywall, and is one of the reasons I am so drawn to reporting for this public service project. I believe accessibility is a critical way to reform press trust.

I have chased investigative and enterprise stories – practicing neutrality toward facts, but not their consequences – in my Feature Writing and Advanced Reporting courses. These pieces address issues concerning halfway homes in the role of the Prison Industrial Complex, and widespread election distrust and interference at the local level.

## EXAMPLE 3:

I believe my goals in helping people make meaningful connections would contribute to the Summer 2023 Video Internship at the Wall Street Journal. As the current Marketing Vice President of the Carolina Union Activities Board, I manage the organization's social media and publicity events to achieve an outreach of 9.6K accounts in 30 days. This gave me insight on the importance of engaging and bridging diverse communities through our organization's events. During my internship at Merchantrade Asia in the Advertising and Promotions department, I professionally corresponded with colleagues to better understand the work culture in different departments to create intern recruitment videos. This experience helped me understand that meaningful connections are the foundations of a strong company.



# CLOSING PARAGRAPH

## CLOSING PARAGRAPH - WHAT'S THE POINT?

This is when you really sell yourself as being the perfect candidate for the company. The goal here is to fuse you and your experience with what the company is looking for. They should end this paragraph knowing more about you, but also knowing that you've done your research on them.

## WHAT TO KNOW ABOUT THE BODY PARAGRAPH

- Research, research, research! This paragraph is when the company's "About Page" becomes your best friend. Look at their values. Look at their mission statement. What do you resonate with? Find a way to incorporate it here.
- Tie it together; the closing paragraph is when you bring it all back around. Try to work your opening anecdote in here if possible to really tie a bow on the whole letter.
- Why do you want to work there? Why are you applying for the position? These are the questions your closing paragraph should answer.
- Reiterate your story, your skills and *always* thank them for their consideration. For a sign off, opt for something simple like "Best," or "Sincerely, [YOURNAME]"

# CLOSING PARAGRAPH

## EXAMPLE 1:

While my experiences have prepared me for a potential career at *SELF* and I believe I would be a great support to the staff, I also admire what *SELF* stands for: inclusivity, accuracy, empathy, and autonomy. *SELF* meets their readers where they are, providing accurate, succinct, science-backed information in each story while also remaining approachable and welcoming, no matter where one is in their own wellness journey. I would know – if *SELF* hadn't met me where I was in my camping anxiety, I wouldn't have known to bring earplugs and an eye mask on my trip (they made all the difference.) It would be an honor to work at *SELF* as an editorial assistant; thank you for your consideration.

## EXAMPLE 2:

The Wall Street Journal's mission to equip individuals from all walks of life with the tools to succeed are the attributes I strive to develop in my professional career. I found this to be extremely evident in the newspaper's podcast network, specifically *As We Work*, which aims to provide women with the tools needed to navigate the corporate world. I believe that my ability to facilitate discussions among the youths of Malaysia on current issues for my YouTube channel, *Bouncing Board*, aligns with The Wall Street Journal's goals in uplifting current and future industry leaders.

I appreciate the opportunity to apply for this position. Thank you and I look forward to hearing from you.

# VISIT THE HUB

## NEED MORE HELP? MAKE AN APPOINTMENT!

While these guides are great resources, there are still many tips and tricks for resumes, cover letters, LinkedIn profiles and the job/internship search in general. We're here to help with that!

Career Services in the Hussman Undergraduate Hub offers support on any and all facets of your career journey. We're here to help in any way we can - looking over your application materials, helping you prepare for an interview or networking opportunity and offering advice on career decisions. Or whatever else you can think of! Check out the links below and come see us soon!

**If you want to meet in person, you can make an appointment [here](#).**

**If you want to learn more about Career Services, click [here](#).**

**To check out the Hub instagram page, click [here](#).**

Dear Ms.,

I'm scared of the outdoors. I never went camping growing up, and I prefer a car alarm outside my window to the sounds of crickets or a crackling fire underneath the stars. I'm so nature averse that I almost opted out of a Catskills camping trip last year, that is until I read Hannah Singleton's story in *SELF*, titled "These Camping Tips for Beginners Will Help You Eat, Sleep, and Poop in the Great Outdoors." I consumed every detail, suggestion and recommendation, and because I felt less anxious and more empowered, actually said yes to the trip. It rained the entire time and I barely slept, but I had done it... because of *SELF*. I've relied on *SELF* countless times as a reader, which makes me thrilled to apply for the role of editorial assistant.

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As the founder and creator of my own newsletter, \_\_\_\_\_, I am no stranger to newsletter upkeep and am very comfortable with creating newsletter content. Creating my newsletter has also taught me problem solving skills; I consistently monitor audience metrics and continue to develop ways to bring in new traffic and subscribers. Sticking to a weekly posting schedule has ensured that I can manage my time well and meet a deadline.

While my experiences have prepared me for a potential career at *SELF* and I believe I would be a great support to the staff, I also admire what *SELF* stands for: inclusivity, accuracy, empathy, and autonomy. *SELF* meets their readers where they are, providing accurate, succinct, science-backed information in each story while also remaining approachable and welcoming, no matter where one is in their own wellness journey. I would know – if *SELF* hadn't met me where I was in my camping anxiety, I wouldn't have known to bring earplugs and an eye mask on my trip (they made all the difference.) It would be an honor to work at *SELF* as an editorial assistant; thank you for your consideration.

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Dear Hiring Managers,

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Taking Digital Storytelling last semester was the fire in my belly to pursue content creation. My experiences from that class have helped me redefine my purpose as a content creator by improving my directing, producing, and editing skills.

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Sincerely,

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Though I left my nearly two months in Mexico City with what seemed like more questions than answers, I mined an untold story. Beneath the searing headlines declaring the deaths of one Mexican journalist after another, I sensed hope. My conversations with journalists, NGOs, lawyers and professors revealed that even in a deadly press climate, Mexican journalists have risen by professionalizing and collectivizing in ways that have improved the quality of journalism produced.

Their answers to my question cemented something I had come to understand: what better seat can you get at the table, both consuming and serving your communities and democracy? I first decided to be a journalist because I wanted to spend my life as an interdisciplinary student and writer. I was fascinated by the way my brain fired while spinning a story from the threads of my reporting. These feelings still hold true, but this hunger has matured into one committed to chasing meaningful work: examining systems of authority, defending democracy and chronicling history and the human experience in ways that matter. It was this critical work I saw in Mexico, at the highest possible stakes.

The Texas Tribune shares my commitment to really understanding the implications of an issue, beyond the impact of breaking coverage. I find its clever reporting positions the facts to stand for themselves, while leading the reader to understand the consequences of these facts. Most recently, I loved the strategic coverage of the 1836 Project, which sourced historians as a way to explore the soundness of what will be a widely distributed educational narrative, which has the power to misinform many Texans. The story carefully approached a contentious national issue but left room for conflicted readers to digest the fibers of fact. This goal must underpin any outlet without a paywall, and is one of the reasons I am so drawn to reporting for this public service project. I believe accessibility is a critical way to reform press trust.

I have chased investigative and enterprise stories – practicing neutrality toward facts, but not their consequences – in my Feature Writing and Advanced Reporting courses. These pieces address issues concerning halfway homes in the role of the Prison Industrial Complex, and widespread election distrust and interference at the local level.

But these stories are founded on a commitment to thorough daily coverage, something I hope to contribute to The Texas Tribune. During my time at the Daily Tar Heel, I reported on detailed mechanisms of University Administration to the students they impacted, such as an overhaul of the course registration process and the committee that researched and lobbied for building name changes.

At The Texas Tribune, I will readily engage with every opportunity to refine these reporting skills. I am drawn to your publication for its position in nearly every salient national policy conversation, and its commitment to accessible, daily and investigative reporting. I am confident I can serve your publication with a deep commitment and enthusiasm for learning.

# NOT ANOTHER COVER LETTER

## 2008

### 2008 WAS A FORMATIVE YEAR IN MY RELATIONSHIP WITH POLITICS.

I can hear you saying, "weren't you in sixth grade?" To which I'll say, "great math." But even at 11 years old, I knew I'd witnessed something special when my mom took me to my first political rally.

I didn't even understand what politics meant, but I knew there was something magical about the energy at the rally. The idea that politics was about something bigger than me immediately drew me in.

I became obsessed with campaigns and politics almost immediately, and took up a habit of watching Meet the Press with my mom every Sunday morning. Looking back, I'm not sure 11-year-old Molly would be fun to be around, but I admire her dedication.

### MEET THE PRESS AUDIENCE, 2008



## 2015

### 2015 WAS THE YEAR I STARTED COLLEGE, AND THE YEAR I FOUND MY LOVE FOR COMMUNICATING ABOUT POLITICS.

I began learning about digital media in my journalism courses, started writing for UNC's independent newspaper, and deepened my passion for progressive politics. I told stories about the achievement gap in local schools, covered local political elections, and learned the power of effective storytelling.

In the years that have followed, I've worked in progressive politics around the clock. Throughout college, I have interned for political non-profits and legislators, organized for campaigns, and volunteered on the weekends to knock doors and text voters. I care deeply about electing candidates who will fight for their constituents — not for their own interests or those of their corporate donors.



In all of these roles, I write, and write, and write. I write policy-based scripts for legislators. I write articles about state politics. I write letters to constituents. I write phone bank scripts and canvassing training materials and input them into NGP. I write a. whole. lot. of. email. newsletters.

## 2019

### 2019 IS THE YEAR I'LL GRADUATE FROM COLLEGE. YIKES.

The next chapter of my life is full of question marks and fill-in-the-blanks, but one thing is for sure: I want to keep using digital media to drive progressive change and fight back against injustice.

Stand Up America's work to protect democracy, elect progressive leaders and fight back against Trump's agenda aligns perfectly with my values and aspirations.

Our shared priorities and my genuine passion for politics and digital strategy would make me a perfect candidate for the Digital Organizer position.

Joining a team dedicated to building grassroots movements through the use of messaging and digital media would be a dream come true. I would love to speak more about my experience or the position at your convenience.