



# CAREER SERVICES CENTER

## COVER LETTER GUIDE FOR ECE/EDUCATION MAJORS

(Information is to be used as a guidance and not repeated verbatim)

### **WHAT IS A COVER LETTER AND WHY IS ONE NEEDED?**

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A cover letter is your personal introduction to a prospective employer. It is a way to market yourself. Although some employers may not specifically ask for one, it is better to provide one, as it is an example of your organization and communication skills, specifically your writing skills. Is your cover letter well-written, nicely formatted, grammar and spell checked, etc.? If a job position is not posted, a cover letter is a great way to network yourself into an interview or job.

A concise and well-written cover letter can lead an employer to consider your candidacy and go on to view your resume and job application in detail. Therefore, make sure to avoid repeating your resume verbatim and using flowery language excessively. Your cover letter should enhance your resume. Again, it should outline your interest in a specific position within an organization and why you are qualified.

There is no argument that the cover letter may take you more time to compose for each position that you are interested in than just using a canned cover letter with the employer information changed. But if you truly care about having the opportunity to interview and later get that position, tailoring your cover letter to each job position, is the way to go. Again, your cover letter and resume together, can help land you an interview. This is your initial opportunity to put your best foot forward.

### **HOW TO CREATE A COVER LETTER?**

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**Research:** Do your homework. Take the time to learn about the organization, business, company, etc. and what was posted on the job description. Read the job description clearly. Pay attention to the preferred and required qualifications and be sure to emphasize how you meet the required qualifications in your cover letter. Note that in some job descriptions, employers may request prospective candidates to address a certain question or questions in their cover letter. This question may be simple, or it might be an important part of the application process. So, as you are conducting your research, here are some questions to think about.

- What is the employer looking for in a candidate? Review what the employer listed as the important qualifications.
- What skills, abilities, training, education, background, experience, etc. do you have that match the skills that the employer wants? Don't forget that skills are also transferable. If you don't have the exact skill or experience, try to use the closest example you have.
- Why that position? What interested you in the position? Were you referred or recommended to that position?
- Why do you want to work for this employer? Research the company. What does the organization do? What are their goals? What characterizes the organization's culture?

**Content:** Every cover letter that you create should be tailored to the specific job description and employer. It shows that you have carefully read the job description and understand what the job entails. Never send a generic, one size fits all type of cover letter. In your cover letter, you need to demonstrate what you know about the organization/industry, specifically your understanding of the job, and why you are a good fit. One way to show this is to use the job description in your cover letter. Match your language to the language of the employer. Use plenty of action verbs. Directly demonstrate how you meet the required qualifications for that specific job, by emphasizing between 2 or 3 most relevant skills, abilities, education, training, background, experience, etc. you possess that match the most important or required skills an employer is looking for as listed in their posted job description.

Finally, take the time and care to construct your cover letter. Although your cover letter should reflect your individuality, your personal vision and uniqueness, remember your cover letter is way to "introduce yourself," so it is best to err on the side of professionalism. It is also important to proofread your cover letter as well as



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have other individuals, including the SMC Career Services Center team, proofread it before submitting it to an employer.

**Format:** The font of your cover letter should be the same as the font you used for your resume. Keep the font size to within 1 point, larger or smaller, than the general font size used for your resume. For the same reasons as your resume, you should try to keep your cover letter to one page in length. If you will be attaching your cover letter, make sure to send it in Adobe PDF file form and not a Microsoft Word or Google Doc file form. When you send it in Adobe PDF file form, make sure your formatting translated correctly before submitting it to an employer.

**Framework:** Your cover letter needs to include the following areas:

**Heading:** For consistency purposes, it is recommended that you use the same heading as your resume. As such, your heading should include items like your name and contact information. If you have a current job letterhead or business card, don't use it. When posting your information in a public forum, consider what information you want accessible to a stranger. This may determine what information you list.

- *Name:* It should be a larger font type size that makes your name stand out, easy to read, but not look out of place. The font type size can range from 16 to 22 point and bolding is optional. Make sure your name matches your resume, cover letter, online application materials, calls to references and background checks. If you are referred to by a nickname, for example, some international students go by an alternative name and not their given name, one of the ways to list your name is
  - First or Given Name "Preferred Name" Last Name, Surname or Family Name
- *Address:* Typically, listing your address is standard on resumes. However, as the landscape of communication changes, your address is sensitive information that you should list on your resume if you feel comfortable. Check to see if the job application requires a physical address on the resume. Some alternatives to listing a physical address include
  - City, State
  - City, State, Zip Code
- *Email Address:* List a professional email that you check regularly. If an employer needs to contact you, this is one of the methods they may choose to use. A combination of your first and last name is common.
- *Phone Number:* List a phone number with a voicemail set up to receive messages. If you use your cell phone as your contact phone number, be prepared to handle a professional conversation whenever you answer your phone. Make sure to always use a professional outgoing message on your phone. For example, "You have reached the voicemail of Julie Conners, I am sorry I missed your call. Please leave your name, number and a brief message and I will return your call as soon as possible. Thank you."
- *Personal website/social media usernames/LinkedIn profiles:* Only include personal websites, links to social media handles and/or LinkedIn accounts if they are current and up-to-date, relevant and will enhance your chance of obtaining an interview.



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Once you have listed your contact information, the next lines should include the full date (month/day/year), the name of the person you are sending your cover letter to and that person's current title, company name and company address. See example below:

Date (i.e. April 28, 2020)

Contact Person's Name

Contact Person's Current Title

Company Name

Company Address

*Exceptions:* If you are short on space, only list the date. If you are typing your cover letter into the body of an email and not attaching the cover letter to your email, you can start with the salutation.

**Salutation:** Always try to address your cover letter to a specific person rather than "To Whom It May Concern," "Sir," or "Madam." Take the time to find out this information. If you do not have a name, contact the organization, and politically try to obtain a name. Be sure you have the person's full name, correct spelling, and current title. Unless you are aware of the gender pronoun a person identifies with, simply list the individual's full name. Do not assume using Mr., Mrs., Miss, etc., based on a given name. The greeting should be formal and include a colon (:), and not a comma (,) or semicolon (;), at the end. If you are not able to obtain a contact person, you can use the phrase to "Dear Name of Job Title Hiring Manager."

**Opening Paragraph:** The first paragraph is an introduction. You want to attract the reader's interest. Always begin by introducing yourself. Let the employer know who you are, what job position you are applying to (use the exact job title listed in the job description), how you heard about the position and why you are interested in working for that employer. If you were referred or recommended to the position, mention the person's name in this paragraph. In the opening paragraph, briefly introduce your background, education, skills, and experience. This paragraph serves as an outline for the body of your letter, again by mentioning what you will highlight later in your cover letter.

**The Body:** The body of your cover letter should be 1 to 2 paragraphs long. This part of your cover letter highlights the most important qualities you can offer to the employer, as it relates to the job description. You want to get the employer's attention and interest in your candidacy. Therefore, you should expand on the specific skills you have that match what the employer is looking for in the person to be hired, what is stated in the job description and what you briefly introduced in your opening paragraph. Do not just list jobs you have held that they can find on your resume or skills that you don't have. You need to provide specific examples of how you have demonstrated a skill set that is required for the job position. Remember, the cover letter can make your job application and encourage an employer to look at your resume.

You want to directly connect your experience and background to the skill set the employer is seeking. In a direct, confident, and professional manner, sell your skills, education, training, experiences, abilities, etc. as it relates to the needs of the organization. Include what you can do for the organization and not what the organization can do for you. For example, if an employer is looking for someone with research skills, this is an opportunity for you to expand on your experience working on a research project for one of your classes or a job you held.

Finally, although the cover letter is an opportunity for you to show your personality, unless the job



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description specifically asks for comedian-like skills, maintain professionalism. This also means excluding any personal material unless it relates to the job.

**Closing Paragraphs:** The closing paragraph should summarize your qualifications and reiterate your interest in the position. Be sure to outline what action you will take to follow up with an employer as well as a thank you to the employer for their time and consideration. It is also recommended that you include your contact information (i.e. phone number and email address), in case your resume and letter become separated. Again, make sure your voicemail is set up, you have a professional outgoing message and that you regularly check your voicemail messages. The email you list should also be professional and one you regularly check. You can end the paragraph by stating that you look forward to the opportunity to further discuss the position.

**Closing Signature:** With any employment related correspondence, it is best to use a more formal language and tone. Examples of words or phrases you can use to close your cover letter include:

- Sincerely,
- Regards,
- Best,
- Best Regards,
- Respectfully,

### ADDITIONAL ASSISTANCE

The following are the services offered by the SMC Career Services Center to SMC students who are currently enrolled in 3 units or more or are currently enrollment in Counseling 12 or Counseling 16 at SMC. To receive assistance in these areas, please contact the SMC Career Services Center at (310) 434-4337 to schedule an appointment. The Career Services Center is located on main campus (1900 Pico Blvd., Santa Monica, CA 90405).

• Assistance with Major/Career Selection	• Mock Interviews
• Career Exploration and Planning	• Recruitment and Networking Events
• Class/Group Presentations (Request from the instructor)	• Resume and Cover Letter Development, Writing and Critiquing
• Part-Time and Full-Time Employment Resources/Listings	• Applied and Service-Learning Opportunities
• Internship Program and Resources	• Volunteer Opportunities
• LinkedIn Profile Development	• Workshop on Career Relevant Topics
• On-campus Employment Student Help and/or Federal Work Study (FWS) Listings	



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[Heading Used for Resume]

January 20, 2020

Jane Hahm  
Director  
Santa Monica Loving Preschool  
1234 Pico Boulevard  
Santa Monica, CA 98765

Dear Jane Hahm:

I am writing to apply for the Preschool Teacher Assistant position at Santa Monica Loving Preschool. I learned about this position through a job posting on the Santa Monica College Career Services website. I am confident you will find my commitment to education, solid instructional methods and hand-on experience will be a positive asset to your preschool.

I am currently finishing my last semester at Santa Monica College and will be receiving my Associate in Science - Early Childhood Studies Degree this Spring 2020. I have completed 40 units in early childhood education and have submitted my application for the California Child Development Teacher permit. At Santa Monica College, I completed courses focused on health and nutrition, language and literature, and curriculum, while achieving a 3.5 grade point average. Upon completing my degree this spring, I will have the knowledge, skills, and experience to meet the requirements for early childhood professionals working in programs regulated by the California Department of Social Services.

Last year, I completed over 100 volunteer hours as a teacher's aide in the classroom as well as an assistant in the after-school program at Grant Muir Montessori Program. I primarily worked with the preschool lead instructor to develop innovative lesson plans for students participating in the bilingual Spanish program. In the classroom, I worked directly with the students to ensure their understanding of the Spanish language. As an assistant in the after-school program, I tutored elementary school students in math and science. This included working with students who lacked basic verbal and communication skills but had a firm understanding of math and science concepts. These experiences have taught me how to tailor my approach to students' needs and how to communicate information to various groups, skills I know would serve as an asset at Santa Monica Loving Preschool.

In closing, I would be delighted to be a part of your team and I am confident that if accepted I will be able to utilize my education and knowledge of solid instructional methods effectively; therefore, providing a positive contribution to Santa Monica Loving Preschool. Thank you for taking the time to consider my application and my attached resume. Please feel free to contact me at (310) 987-6543 or by email at [Corsair.Joe@student.smc.edu](mailto:Corsair.Joe@student.smc.edu). I will follow up with you next week to see if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Joe Corsair