

Creating Cover Letters

Applications, Resumes, Interviews and Following Up

Pathways to Success



Introduction

After building and tailoring your resume, the next step is learning how to create a cover letter. A cover letter is a written document that usually goes alongside your resume when you apply for a job. It helps explain why you are applying, why your experience matters for that specific role, and how your background connects to what the employer is looking for.

A resume gives the employer a structured summary of your education, experience, skills, and qualifications. A cover letter is different because it gives you more space to explain your experience in a narrative way. Instead of only listing what you have done, you can tell the employer why your experience is relevant and how it may help you succeed in the role.

Many employers expect or accept a cover letter. Some employers may clearly say that they do not want one. Other employers may give specific instructions about whether the cover letter should be uploaded separately, included in the same document as the resume, or entered into an online application form. For this reason, you should always read the application instructions carefully before submitting your application.

If an employer asks for one document, the cover letter usually appears before the resume. If the employer asks for separate files, follow the instructions and upload each document in the correct place.

The key point is that a cover letter should help the employer understand why your experience matters to them. It should not simply repeat your resume. It should connect your real experience to the job.

Cover Letter Basics

A cover letter should usually be short and focused. In most cases, one page is enough. The goal is not to explain your full life story. The goal is to choose the experiences that best connect to the job and explain why they matter.

Your cover letter should be professional, clear, and easy to read. Use full sentences and short paragraphs. Avoid overly casual language, slang, or jokes. The tone should be respectful and confident, but not exaggerated.

You should usually adjust your cover letter for each job. You may reuse some parts, but the letter should still connect to the specific role, employer, and job posting. If the same cover letter could be sent to any employer, it is probably too general.

If you know the hiring manager's name, you can use it in the greeting. If you do not know the name, you can use a general professional greeting such as "Dear Hiring Manager" or "Dear Selection Committee."

Before submitting, check that the employer's name, job title, department, date, and your contact information are correct.

Elements of a Cover Letter

A cover letter usually includes several main parts: the header, introduction, experience paragraphs, and role fit paragraph. These parts may appear in slightly different orders depending on the situation, but each part has a purpose.

Simon Belfast North Bay, ON, 123-456-7890, SimonBelfastEmail@email.ca, LinkedIn Aug 29, 2039 Kristopher Smith Coordinator of International Student Service, Canadore College 100 College Drive, North Bay, ON	Header
Dear Kristopher Smith, I am writing to apply for the International Student Navigator position at Canadore College. As a current Business student at Canadore with experience in customer service, student event support, and front-facing communication, I am interested in supporting students as they adjust to college life and access the services available to them.	Intro
Through my volunteer experience with Canadore, I have helped students with registration, deliver, and clean up student events, workshops, and cultural activities. These experiences have allowed me to interact directly with students, answer questions, provide directions, and support participants in a professional and welcoming manner. I understand that students may need clear information, patience, and a positive first point of contact when navigating college services. In my role as a Customer Service Associate at Fresh Store Grocery, I have developed strong communication and problem-solving skills in a busy front-facing environment. I assist customers with questions, purchases, and product locations while working closely with supervisors and team members to complete tasks accurately and on time. This experience has helped me stay organized, reliable, and calm when supporting people with different needs. I also have experience using Microsoft Word, PowerPoint, Outlook, and Excel for school projects, communication, and basic data organization. Combined with my teamwork, attention to detail, and interest in student support, I believe I can contribute positively to Canadore's international student community.	Experience
Thank you for considering my application. I would welcome the opportunity to discuss how my customer service experience, student involvement, and commitment to helping others would make me a strong fit for the International Student Navigator position. Sincerely,	Role Fit

The **header** includes your contact information and the employer's information. This may include your name, phone number, email address, city, date, employer name, employer title, department, and organization. The header helps make the document look professional and shows who the letter is from and who it is for.

The **introduction** tells the employer what job you are applying for and briefly explains why you are interested. This section should be clear and direct. The employer should not have to guess which position you are applying for.

The **experience paragraphs** explain the experience, skills, education, or qualifications that connect most strongly to the job. These paragraphs should not list everything from your resume. Instead, they should focus on the parts of your background that best match the posting. You can use examples from paid work, volunteer experience, class projects, placements, campus involvement, community involvement, or other relevant activities.

The **role fit paragraph** summarizes why you may be a good fit for the position and why you are interested in the role. This is where you can answer the question: “Why are you looking for this job?” Employers want to understand not only what experience you have, but also why you are interested in this specific opportunity.

A strong cover letter should be focused, honest, professional, and connected to the job posting.

Connecting Experience to the Job

A resume and a cover letter work together, but they do not do the same job.

A resume usually lists your relevant experience, education, skills, certifications, and accomplishments in a clear and organized format. It helps the employer quickly see what you have done and what strengths you may bring as an applicant.

A cover letter gives you a different opportunity. It allows you to explain your experience in a more narrative way. Instead of only listing your strengths, you can explain why those strengths matter for the specific role.

This is one of the most important differences between a resume and a cover letter. In a resume, you might list customer service, event support, Microsoft 365, teamwork, or communication skills. In a cover letter, you can explain how those experiences connect to the job and why they may help you succeed in the position.

A strong cover letter should help the employer understand three things:

- Why your experience matters for this role;
- Why your strengths make you a strong fit;
- Why the role connects to your goals or interests.

For example, a student may list customer service experience on their resume. In a cover letter, they can explain that customer service helped them build communication, patience, problem-solving, and experience supporting people in a busy front-facing environment.

A student may list volunteer event experience on their resume. In a cover letter, they can explain that this experience helped them interact with students, answer questions, provide directions, and contribute to a welcoming environment.

A student may list Microsoft 365 on their resume. In a cover letter, they can explain how they used those tools for communication, presentations, school projects, or basic organization.

The goal is not to make your experience sound bigger than it is. The goal is to explain the connection between your real experience and the employer’s needs.

For the International Student Navigator example, Simon's resume shows that he has customer service experience, student event support experience, Microsoft 365 experience, and group project experience. His cover letter gives him space to explain why those experiences matter for a student-facing role in the International Department.

A resume shows the employer what you have done. A cover letter explains why it matters.

Example Cover Letter

What Simon Is Doing

Simon is using the cover letter to explain the story behind his resume.

His resume lists customer service, event support, Microsoft 365, and school experience. The cover letter explains why those experiences matter for the International Student Navigator role.

Simon connects his volunteer experience to student support, events, answering questions, giving directions, and creating a welcoming environment.

He connects his customer service experience to communication, problem-solving, reliability, and supporting people in a busy front-facing environment.

He also connects his Microsoft 365 experience, teamwork, and interest in student support to the communication needs of the role.

The green parts show where Simon makes these connections clearly.

Simon Belfast

North Bay, ON, 123-456-7890, SimonBelfastEmail@email.ca, LinkedIn

Aug 29, 2039

Kristopher Smith

Coordinator of International Student Service, Canadore College
100 College Drive, North Bay, ON

Dear Kristopher Smith,

I am writing to apply for the **international student navigator position at Canadore College**. As a current Business student at Canadore with experience in customer service, student event support, and front-facing communication, I am interested in supporting students as they adjust to college life and access the services available to them.

Through my volunteer experience with Canadore Volunteer Support, I have helped set up, deliver, and clean up student events, workshops, and cultural activities. **These experiences have allowed me to interact directly with students, answer questions, provide directions, and support participants in a professional and welcoming manner. I understand that students may need clear information, patience, and a positive first point of contact when navigating college services.**

In my role as a Customer Service Associate at Fresh Store Grocery, I **have developed strong communication and problem-solving skills in a busy front-facing environment**. I assist customers with questions, purchases, and product locations while working closely with supervisors and team members to complete tasks accurately and on time. **This experience has helped me stay organized, reliable, and calm when supporting people with different needs.**

I also have experience using Microsoft Word, PowerPoint, Outlook, and Excel for school projects, communication, and basic data organization. Combined with **my teamwork, attention to detail, and interest in student support**, I believe these **skills would allow me to contribute positively to Canadore's international student services team.**

Thank you for considering my application. I would welcome the opportunity to discuss **how my customer service experience, student involvement, and commitment to helping others would make me a strong fit for the international student navigator position.**

Sincerely,

Simon Belfast

What Makes This Cover Letter Strong?

This cover letter is stronger because Simon does not simply repeat his resume. Instead, he explains why his experience matters for the International Student Navigator position.

His resume can show that he has customer service experience, event support experience, and Microsoft 365 experience. The cover letter explains how those experiences connect to the role.

Simon connects his volunteer experience to student support, event support, and creating a welcoming environment. He explains that helping with student events allowed him to interact with students, answer questions, provide directions, and support participants professionally.

He connects his customer service experience to communication, problem-solving, reliability, and working in a busy front-facing environment. This helps the employer understand how retail experience can still be relevant to a student-facing role.

He also connects his Microsoft 365 experience, teamwork, attention to detail, and interest in student support to the communication and administrative needs of the position.

The green highlighting shows the most important connections. These are the places where Simon explains the value of his experience instead of only listing what he has done.

A resume shows the employer what experience you have. A cover letter explains why that experience matters

What to Avoid When Writing a Cover Letter

Avoid writing a cover letter that is too general. A cover letter should be connected to the specific job you are applying for. If the same cover letter could be sent to any employer for any job, it is probably too vague.

Avoid simply repeating your resume. Your resume already lists your experience. Your cover letter should explain why that experience matters for the role.

Avoid exaggerating your experience. If you assisted with events, do not write that you managed all events unless that is true. If you have basic Microsoft Excel experience, do not describe yourself as advanced unless you can explain and demonstrate that skill.

Avoid focusing only on why the job would help you. It is fine to explain why you are interested, but the employer also wants to know how your skills and experience could help their department, customers, clients, students, or team.

Avoid ignoring the application instructions. If the employer asks for a specific format, file type, subject line, or required information, follow those instructions carefully.

Before submitting your cover letter, check:

- Did I name the correct job?
- Did I connect my experience to the posting?
- Did I explain why I am interested?

- Did I avoid simply repeating my resume?
- Did I follow the application instructions?
- Did I check spelling, names, dates, and contact information?

What Should You Do Next?

Before moving to the next video, try writing a cover letter for the same role you tailored your resume for. Use the job posting to decide which experiences are most relevant. Then write a short, focused cover letter that explains why those experiences matter for the position. The next video will focus on interviewing in Canada.

The next section is **Interviewing in Canada**. The next section will explain the basics of interviews in Canada, and how to better prepare for your next Interview.