



Cover Letter Guide

A well-written cover letter will compliment your resume by discussing your interest in the position and the experiences and skills that qualify you to be considered for the position. An employer may not be able to tell **why** you are interested in a position from your resume. In some cases, a cover letter may be optional, but it is recommended as it enhances your resume and shows genuine interest in the position.

Cover Letter Types

There are two types of cover letters that you may need to write while at VMI.

1. **Application Cover Letter** – A cover letter created for a current posted position opening.
2. **Prospecting Cover Letter** – A cover letter created to inquire about potential openings with a particular company. This type of cover letter will be similar to the applicant cover letter, except that this cover letter type should be focused on your interest and contribution to the company.

Step 1: Include Your Contact Information

A cover letter is a form of business correspondence. Begin the cover letter by providing your contact information. Include your name, mailing address, email, and cell phone. This information should match the formatting of your resume.

Ex: Tracy Jackson
1234 Main Street
Lexington, Virginia 24450
jacksonta@mail.vmi.edu
540-555-5555

Copy and paste the contact information from your resume. Using the same format for both documents will give you a more cohesive presentation.

Step 2: Include the Date

If you are typing out your contact information include one space in between the end of your contact information and the date. Type the date out and do not abbreviate.

Step 3: Include the Employer's Contact Information

Include a space in between the date and the employer's contact information. You should include the name of the person receiving the letter, their position, the business name, and address. The point of contact may be listed in the job posting, on Handshake, or on the company website; you can also contact the company directly. If you do not know who the contact person for the position is, you should not include a contact name.

| | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Ex: Francis Smith | Ex: ABC Company |
| Human Resources Director | 234 Main Street |
| ABC Company | Richmond, Virginia 23225 |
| 234 Main Street | |
| Richmond, Virginia 23225 | |

Step 4: Include the name of the Position and Reference or Job Requisition Number

Companies frequently use job and reference numbers along with their job openings to organize job postings. Include a single line that states the full position title and a reference/requisition number. Following this step will ensure that your application materials can be matched to the correct position.

Ex. Re: Data Analyst I (Job: 224321)

Step 5: Include a salutation

A salutation is a way of beginning a cover letter. If a contact person is listed, you should direct your letter to that individual. Following the salutation, a colon is more formal than a comma.

Ex. Dear Mr. / Ms. (Contact Last Name): or Dear First Name Last Name:

If you do not know who will be reviewing your cover letter consider one of the following options:

Ex. Dear Hiring Manager Dear Selection Committee
Dear Human Resources Director

Note: Avoid using Mr., Ms., or Mrs., if you are unsure of who will primarily be reviewing your cover letter.

Step 6: The Body of the Cover Letter

The body of the cover letter will be used as an introduction and it should convey your qualifications and interest in the company and position.

- **Paragraph 1:** This paragraph should be 2-3 sentences introducing yourself, sharing how/where you learned of the position, and sharing why you are interested in the company and position. You can also briefly introduce your background and experience. If you are applying to the position due to a personal referral or recommendation, you will want to include their name in this paragraph.
- **Paragraph 2-3:** Relate your skills and qualifications to the position and organization. This will demonstrate your knowledge of the position/organization and illustrate how your skills and qualifications can be an asset. Remember: show what you can do for the company. The position description will assist you in relating your skills and experience to how you can fulfill their needs, so you can position yourself as an ideal candidate. If the listing requests an excellent problem solver, reference an issue that you solved at one of your work experiences or college activities. The cover letter is an opportunity to expand on experiences that you may not have been able to describe on your resume.
- **Closing Paragraph:** The closing paragraph should be brief. In this paragraph summarize your interest, thank them for their consideration, and share how they may contact you.

Step 7: Include a Closing and Signature

Use “Sincerely,” “Respectfully,” or “Best” to close your cover letter. Insert two lines following your closing as space for your signature. Following those two spaces, you should hit Enter/Return one more time and Type out your name. Here is an example:

Ex. Respectfully,

(Two line spaces)
Tracy Jackson

Step 8: Sign Your Cover Letter

It is recommended that you sign your letter before you send it to an employer. If you are emailing the letter, you can print out your letter, sign it, and have the letter scanned with your signature; you can also create a digital signature using a tablet.

Step 9: Final Review

Some final tips before submitting your cover letter:

- Your cover letter should be targeted for each application; it should **NOT** be a restatement of your resume.
- No longer than one page.
- The formatting should match your resume (contact information, font type/ size, margins, etc.).
- Avoid using contractions, proofread for grammatical errors, use a standard font, and use action verbs.
- Save the file as a PDF using an appropriate file name (ex. Tracy_Jackson_Cover_Letter2.2.20) and make sure that the formatting is correct after converting.
- Put yourself in the reader’s shoes and read it from their perspective; do you still seem like an ideal candidate?

Cover Letter Format

Your Name

Mailing address

City, state, and zip

Telephone number(s):

Email address:

Step 1: Include Your Contact Information

Today's date

Step 2: Include Today's Date

Your addressee's name

Professional title

Organizational name

Mailing address

City, state, and zip

Step 3: Include the Employers Contact Information

Re: Full Job Title and Requisition or Job #

Step 4: Include the Name of the Position and Reference Number

Dear (Salutation):

Step 5: Include a Salutation

Start your letter with a statement that establishes a connection with the reader - usually a strong reason for considering the company or position is a good start. Mention any referral source if appropriate. It's important to get their attention and encourage them to continue reading. Briefly (1-3 sentences) say what job you are applying for.

Step 6: Body of the Cover Letter

The mid-section of your letter should be one or two short paragraphs that make relevant points about your qualifications. You want to make clear why they should consider you. Show your understanding of the organization and why your past experiences, education, background and/or skills are a good fit. Reference your enclosed resume in the text. You should not repeat your resume information, but seek to strengthen it. Try to keep your paragraph short with no more than 5-7 sentences. Overall, try to make 3-4 good points about why you are a good fit for the company.

The last paragraph (1-3 sentences) should initiate action by explaining what you will do next (e.g., call the employer) or prompt the reader to contact you to set up an interview. Close by saying "thank you."

Respectfully,

Step 7: Include a Closing and Type Your Name

Your handwritten signature

Your name (typed)

Step 8: Remember to Sign Your Name

Tracy A. Jackson
8 E. Washington St.
Lexington, VA 24450
Cell: 540-111-1112
jacksona@mail.vmi.edu

September 27, 2019

J. S. Smith
Managing Director
Jacobs Engineering
221 Job Search Way
Lexington, VA 24450

Dear Mr. Smith:

A few weeks ago, I visited the Jacobs Engineering site to research potential positions. I was pleased to find an opportunity working as a Technical Sales Representative at Jacobs Engineering. After visiting Jacobs' page on LinkedIn, I completed an informational interview with Bob Smith who is a Division Sales Leader. Bob referred me to additional information about the company and encouraged me to apply for a position with the company. I would like the opportunity to work with your organization because of your commitment to solar and sustainable energy. Having expanded operations throughout the east coast, I can imagine how critical it will be to add the best sales representatives to your team.

I have been passionate about solar energy for many years. This past summer, I worked as 1 of 5 employees for Bright Panel Energy Solutions. In my work, I learned quickly about the multi-step process required to help a client to transition to using solar energy. After two weeks of training, I completed site visits with nearly 100 businesses in the Virginia Beach area to discuss the benefits of a solar energy solution. I spoke to business owners directly and discovered how much I enjoyed sharing potential solutions to reduce their carbon footprint and energy costs. I was pleased to read that Jacobs Engineering Sales Representatives complete an in-depth interview of their customers and take such care throughout the multi-month process. A few weeks ago, I had the opportunity to speak with Bob Parks at the Grand Oaks location. He shared that he enjoys his job because he gets to work in a diverse of environments and he is constantly learning about new technology and changes within the industry. It takes a specific type of person to be successful at this type of position, and I believe that I would be a good fit. My experience in college has challenged me to learn a significant amount of new information while also balancing a multiple priorities.

My interest in the Technical Sales position is strong. I welcome any questions you may have about my application. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Tracy A. Jackson

Cover Letter Sample 2

Tracy Ann Jackson

Permanent Address: 8. E. Washington ST., Lexington, VA 24450

Current Address: VMI Box 11111, Lexington, VA 24450 – **Cell:** (540) 111-1112

Email: jacksona@mail.vmi.edu

September 27, 2019

James S. Smith
Managing Director
Jacobs Engineering
221 Job Search Way
Lexington, Virginia 24450

Re: Technical Sales Representative (Job ID: 2312523)

Dear Hiring Manager:

It is with great enthusiasm that I share my interest in the Technical Sales Representative position opening with Jacobs Engineering. I recently finished my second summer internship experience with your office. Mr. Jones, the Human Resource Director, encouraged me to apply for your entry-level sales position. I believe that my internship experience with your company, strong academic record, and sales experience make me an excellent candidate for this position.

The summer internships have allowed me to shadow other sales representatives and develop an in-depth understanding of the requirements for the position. My work in the VMI Call Center has also allowed me many opportunities to develop my sales techniques and achieve record levels of alumni support. As an NCAA Division I athlete, I've also learned to manage a rigorous athletic, academic, and military schedule weekly. The ability to handle multiple priorities and prevail with a strong grade point average has been instrumental in preparing me for the demanding routine of a sales representative. I believe my many experiences and accomplishments have prepared me well for Jacobs Engineering.

My interest in the Technical Sales position remains strong and I hope we can meet to discuss it soon. I will contact your office next week, to ensure you received my application materials and see if you have any questions. Thank you for taking the time to consider my application.

Sincerely,

Handwritten Signature

Tracy A. Jackson