

Cover Letters



TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY

School of Law

Office of
Career Services

Cover letters are one of the most important tools for your job search. Cover letters serve as an introduction to potential employers, highlight your skills, interests, and experience, and convey your writing style and writing ability.



Page length: One page, four paragraphs at most

Margins: You should not go smaller than .75 inches on the top and sides and .5 on the bottom.

Fonts:

- Calibri
- Arial
- Helvetica
- Book Antiqua
- Century Schoolbook
- Garamond
- Times New Roman
- Verdana

ProTip!

Your font should match your resume font.

Font Size: Should be no less than 11pt

Salutation: Your letter should always be addressed to a named individual, usually called the Recruiting Coordinator or the Hiring Partner, who is responsible for hiring.

ProTip!

- If you do not know that person’s name or title, you should call the employer directly.
- Be sure to use the correct honorific, such as “Judge” or “Justice” for a judge.
- Use “Ms.” (*not* “Mrs.” *not* “Miss”) to address females.

Composition: The **first paragraph** tells the employer who you are and why you are writing. The **second, and possibly third, paragraphs** comprise the body of the letter. These tell the employer more about your skills and why you would be a good fit for the position. The **final paragraph** is your closing. It wraps up the letter and lets the employer know what you want from them in the future.

ProTip!

Cover letters should be tailored to the firm or organization to which you are applying. Research the employer so you can express in your letter why you are a perfect fit for them.

SAMPLE FORMATTING

Your name
Address
City, State Zip Code

Month Date, Year

Individual's Name
Title
Firm/Organization Name
Address
City, State Zip Code

Dear Mr./Ms.:

Paragraph I: How you were referred and why; who you are; purpose of the letter; name of the position for which you are applying.

Paragraph II/III: Why you are interested in the position and firm or organization, and why you are qualified to work for the firm or organization. Try to keep this to one paragraph; split it into two if necessary.

Conclusion: Refer to enclosed resume and any other materials you've included. Express a desire to meet for an interview and thank the employer.

Sincerely,

[Insert Signature]

Typed Name
Enclosure



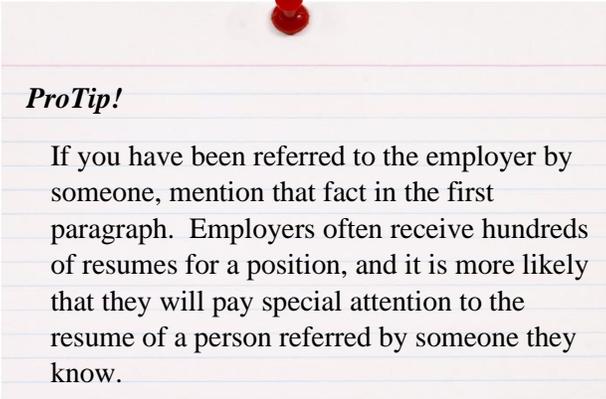
ProTip!

Adding your handwritten signature can be a nice touch. Create signature image by signing your name in dark fine-tipped Sharpie on a white piece of paper, scanning, and adding as an image under "Signature" in Adobe

Paragraph I

The first paragraph is your introduction. It introduces you, your interest in the employer, what position you are applying for, and what you hope to achieve in this position. The introduction should grab the employer and give him or her a reason to continue reading.

Here are some examples of introductions:



ProTip!

If you have been referred to the employer by someone, mention that fact in the first paragraph. Employers often receive hundreds of resumes for a position, and it is more likely that they will pay special attention to the resume of a person referred by someone they know.

Examples

Referrals

“Joyce Summers from the Sunnydale Neighborhood Association suggested I contact you because of our mutual interest in land use law.”

“Lilah Morgan of Wolfram & Hart recommended that I contact you, as I have recently completed a special project for her involving family law. Since Ms. Morgan is familiar with my work and thought you might have some similar needs, I am asking if we could meet briefly to discuss how I might provide services to your firm this summer.”

Responding to a job post

“I am extremely pleased for the opportunity to apply for the summer 2024 internship with [firm/organization], as I have a great interest in your practice.”

“I am a second year student at Texas A&M University School of Law, and am applying for the summer 2024 internship position with [name of firm]. I am interested in your firm because of my desire to practice law in Fort Worth and to gain experience in the field of real estate law.”

Unsolicited resume

“I read in *Texas Lawyer* that your firm has recently set up an office in Fort Worth, and that you will be concentrating in environmental law. As I have a master’s degree in environmental sciences and worked in the field for five years prior to entering law school, I have a very strong interest in this practice area. I am requesting the opportunity to speak with you about a summer position as a law clerk in your firm.”

“Your firm came to my attention when I attended the Dallas Bar Association luncheon and heard you speak about changes in insurance defense practice by recent actions of the Texas Legislature. I worked in the insurance business for several years before deciding to go to law school, and I would appreciate the opportunity to talk with you about the practice. In fact, I am looking for a part-time summer position, and wonder if you could spare a few minutes to discuss both with me.”

Paragraph II/III

The second, and possibly third, paragraphs of your cover letter compose the body of the letter.

The body should describe:

- Your skills
- Your experience
- How you will meet the employer's needs

Always emphasize your strongest qualities in the letter, whether that is your academic performance, performance in activities such as mock trial, or work experience. If you have a particular background, have taken a specific course, or have other attributes that fit the employer, mention it. Give specifics, and use your research on the employer to show how your skills will benefit the employer.

Avoid repeating exactly what is on your resume, and avoid making general statements about your skills and abilities. Instead, support your skills and abilities with specific examples. If responding to a posted job, the posting will give you a good idea of which skills to highlight that will be most important to the employer. Here are some examples of what to include in body paragraphs:



ProTip!

Don't neglect your experiences and work history prior to law school. Many tasks you have performed before—whether in previous jobs, volunteer work, or in college—involve skills directly transferable to legal practice.

Examples

“I have worked very hard to develop practical experience and skills in trial advocacy and criminal law. As a result, I feel prepared to provide Doherty & Barât with competent, professional assistance in your criminal defense practice.”

“As the enclosed resume indicates, I have interned at a district attorney's office and a federal administrative agency. I was exposed to a number of substantive legal issues in different areas of law, was given rigorous assignments that helped me develop strong research and writing skills, and was fortunate to be able to appear regularly in court. I am interested in working in the litigation department of a mid-sized general practice firm after graduation. I am particularly interested in Sloane, Sark & Derevko because of its involvement in diverse practice areas and its excellent reputation for quality work. I believe that my strong legal skills and work ethic, combined with my academic achievements, will enable me to make a valuable contribution to your firm.”

“In addition to the research and writing skills I have developed through my courses in law school, I gained extensive writing experience in the professional positions I held prior to beginning law school. I worked as a non-profit grant writer, and was successful in obtaining several major grants for my employer. I tremendously enjoy the creative process involved in analyzing matters and producing written work products. It is because of this practical experience that I am confident in my ability to successfully meet the demands of a fast-paced and diverse working environment as an associate in your office.”

“My academic achievements demonstrate that I am dedicated and produce quality work. My GPA places me in the top 15% of my class.”

Conclusion

The final paragraph is the closing.

1. Be sure to conclude in a polite way.
2. Thank the employer for their time.
3. Let the employer know what you want to happen next.

For example, if you will be available for an interview on a specific date, or if you will telephone the employer to schedule an interview, put that in your closing. Above all, be confident and positive.

Here are some examples of closing paragraphs:

Examples

“If my experience and background meet your requirements for a summer law clerk, please contact me at XXX-XXX-XXXX or student@tamu.edu. I will be available to interview any afternoon after 1 p.m.”

“I would appreciate the opportunity to talk with you about what I believe I can bring to Black & Bianco. I do have capabilities from my prior work that I believe can be transferred to the legal office in a way that will help in your practice.”

“I appreciate you taking time from your busy schedule to review my resume. I will call your office to set up a time when we can meet. I look forward to discussing my experience and qualifications with you.”

PROOFREAD!

Be sure to proofread your letter before sending it. Don't rely on spell check to do the work for you.



ProTip!

Reading a letter out loud can often help you catch errors. Include “Enclosure” underneath your signature if you are enclosing materials such as a resume, transcript, or writing sample.

Sample Cover Letters – DO NOT COPY. USE AS A GUIDE ONLY.

Walter White
308 Negra Arroyo Lane
Fort Worth, TX 76107

November 1, 2023

Tony Stark, Esq.
Hiring Partner
Stark and Banner
2011 Avengers Drive
Fort Worth, TX 76102

Don't forget
to add title

If you are
recommended/
referred be sure
to include

Dear Mr. Stark:

One of your former summer associates, Jesse Pinkman, urged me to contact you regarding a summer clerkship at your firm. He spoke highly of the standard of work at your firm as well as your reputation for mentoring young attorneys. I am attracted to Stark and Banner because of its reputation for being a leader in patent prosecution. Prior to entering Texas A&M School of Law, I had an extensive career in chemical engineering, and it is my goal to combine that experience with my legal education as a patent attorney after completing my J.D.

Highlight prior
professional
experience

I believe that my prior work experience as well as my academic achievements would make me an excellent fit for Stark and Banner. While working as an engineer, I developed skills in project management and leading teams to meet strict deadlines and budgets. As outlined on my resume, I was given positions of increasing responsibility during my time at my previous employer, and I exceeded all required targets. I realize that time is also a valuable commodity in legal practice, and as an intern I will strive to continue to complete assignments on time with minimum oversight.

To prepare myself for practice, I have concentrated on improving my research and writing skills. My diligence in this area helped me improve my Legal Analysis, Research and Writing grade from a B+ to an A+ over two semesters. Overall, my work ethic and drive has resulted in my ranking in the top 25% of my class. I would bring this same dedication to hard work to your firm.

I would welcome the opportunity to contribute to the success and goals of Stark and Banner. I am available at your convenience to discuss my qualifications further. Thank you for your time and consideration. I look forward to speaking with you.

Sincerely,

Walter White
Enclosure

Tyrion Lannister
815 Gold Lion Court
Arlington, TX 76003

November 4, 2023

The Honorable George R. R. Martin
District Court, Tarrant County
303 Main Street
Fort Worth, TX 76102

Special
designation for
judges

Dear Judge Martin:

Marjory Tyrell, your former law clerk, suggested I contact you regarding a possible externship in your chambers for the summer of 2024. Marjory spoke very highly of her experience working in your chambers, and of your commitment to mentoring law students and new attorneys.

My professional goal is to practice law in Tarrant County as a litigator. I believe that a judicial internship would provide me with the broad perspective of the challenges facing both judges and attorneys that I will need to be a skilled litigator. Based on my academic record, I am confident that I could make a valuable contribution to your court as an extern. I am a hard worker, currently ranking in the top 15% of my class. In addition, I have greatly improved my research and writing skills by serving as a research assistant this semester for Prof. Baratheon.

I am enclosing the following materials for your review: my resume; a writing sample; my unofficial law school transcript; and three letters of recommendation. The letters are written by Professor Baratheon, Professor Targaryen, and Professor Snow. Please let me know if you would like any other materials. I am available to meet with you at your convenience. Thank you for your time. I look forward to speaking with you.

Respectfully,

When addressing a
judge the signature
changes

Highlight research
assistant positions

Tyrion Lannister
Enclosure

Write exactly as you would on the outside of an envelope.



Michael Bluth
222 Lucille Court
Dallas, TX 76155

January 5, 2024

David Brent
Wernham Hogg, P.C.
319 Slough Lane
Dallas, TX 75063

Highlight location and ties to the area

Dear Mr. Brent:

I am a second-year law student at Texas A&M University School of Law seeking to gain practical legal experience in a Dallas firm this upcoming summer. I am a lifelong resident of Dallas and plan to practice law here upon completion of my J.D. Wernham Hogg is particularly attractive to me because of your firm's extensive real estate practice.



Prior to attending law school, I spent two years at a title company, giving me a strong background in the consumer real estate industry. This semester, I am working as a research assistant for Prof. Gervais developing a rough draft for a law review article focusing on real estate transactions. I believe that these experiences will allow me to contribute to the success and goals of your firm.

I sincerely appreciate you taking time to review my qualifications. I would welcome an opportunity to meet with you. I will contact you next week to schedule a mutually convenient time to meet. If you have any questions or need further information from me, please contact me by e-mail at michael.bluth@modelhome.com or by phone at (817) 555-8368. Thank you for your consideration, and I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Sincerely,

Michael Bluth
Enclosure