

How to Write an Effective Cover Letter



Cover letters are a critical part of a job or internship application, and the UMW Career Center is here to help! Stop by for a drop-in meeting or schedule a coaching appointment. The advice below will get you started.

Salutation

Letterhead: Use the same formatting and include the same information from your resume. Also include the date.

Employer Contact Information: This sits below the letterhead and includes the recipient's name, organization name, and address. Whenever possible, address your letter to a specific individual. If you cannot find the appropriate contact, use "Dear Hiring Manager." For electronic submissions, this section is often optional.

Opening Paragraph

Before you start writing, ask yourself: *Why do I want this position?* Once you have established your "why," you will be in a good place to start writing.

If you have a hook, use it in your first sentence. This could be a referral, a prior interaction, or anything of a professional nature that separates you from other applicants:

- "I attended the UMW alumni panel on March 12 where you mentioned internships with your organization, and I am excited to apply for the Activities Intern role."

If you do not have a hook, state what you are applying for with a brief reference to what makes you a strong candidate:

- "I have three years of customer service experience and strong communication skills that make me a great fit for the Activities Internship."

Body + Language

Don't repeat your resume. Focus on what you offer this specific employer and position. Highlight skills and attributes from the job listing, and emphasize your transferrable skills. Express your enthusiasm for the job and make it clear that you're interested!

Show, don't tell. Whenever possible, provide context and examples. Rather than saying, "I work well with my team," give an example:

- "When our department transitioned to a new supervisor, I shared ideas to help the team adjust, and our new supervisor recognized my contributions as collaborative and supportive. I look forward to bringing this same teamwork to the recreation role."

Keep it brief. Most employers prefer cover letters that are one page at most.

Closing Paragraph

Close with a final statement expressing your enthusiasm for the position, your interest in contributing to the organization, and your desire to meet for an interview.

Sign off simply. You can't go wrong with a "Sincerely," and your name.

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Fredericksburg, VA 540-555-1111 ecareer@mail.umw.edu [linkedin.com/in/elliscareer](https://www.linkedin.com/in/elliscareer) elliscareer.com

March 14, 202X

Mr. Phillip Santos
Manager, Activities Program
Re-Create Now!
123 Cabot Ridge Avenue
Fredericksburg, VA 22404

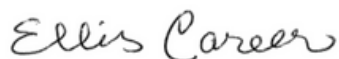
Dear Mr. Santos,

I am writing to apply for the Activities Intern role at Re-Create Now!, which I learned about during the March 12 UMW alumni panel. Your passion for the positive changes you and your team are seeing in the preteens who use your services resonated with me, and I would love to be a part of this effort.

In reviewing the internship description, I see that you value collaboration, leadership, and strong communication skills—qualities I have developed through my work and volunteer experiences. Last summer, as Head Lifeguard, I served as a liaison between our new manager and the junior lifeguards. By facilitating communication and supporting the team through changes in procedures, I helped ensure a smooth transition. My manager recognized my ability to bring the team together and adapt quickly to new challenges. I am confident that this experience, along with my enthusiasm for your mission, will allow me to contribute effectively to Re-Create Now!'s programs.

Thank you for considering my application. I look forward to the opportunity to discuss my qualifications further in an interview. Thank you for taking the time to come to UMW to share your career journey, and this exciting opportunity, with the students.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Ellis Career".

Ellis Career