

# Cover letters that get you noticed (for the right reasons!)

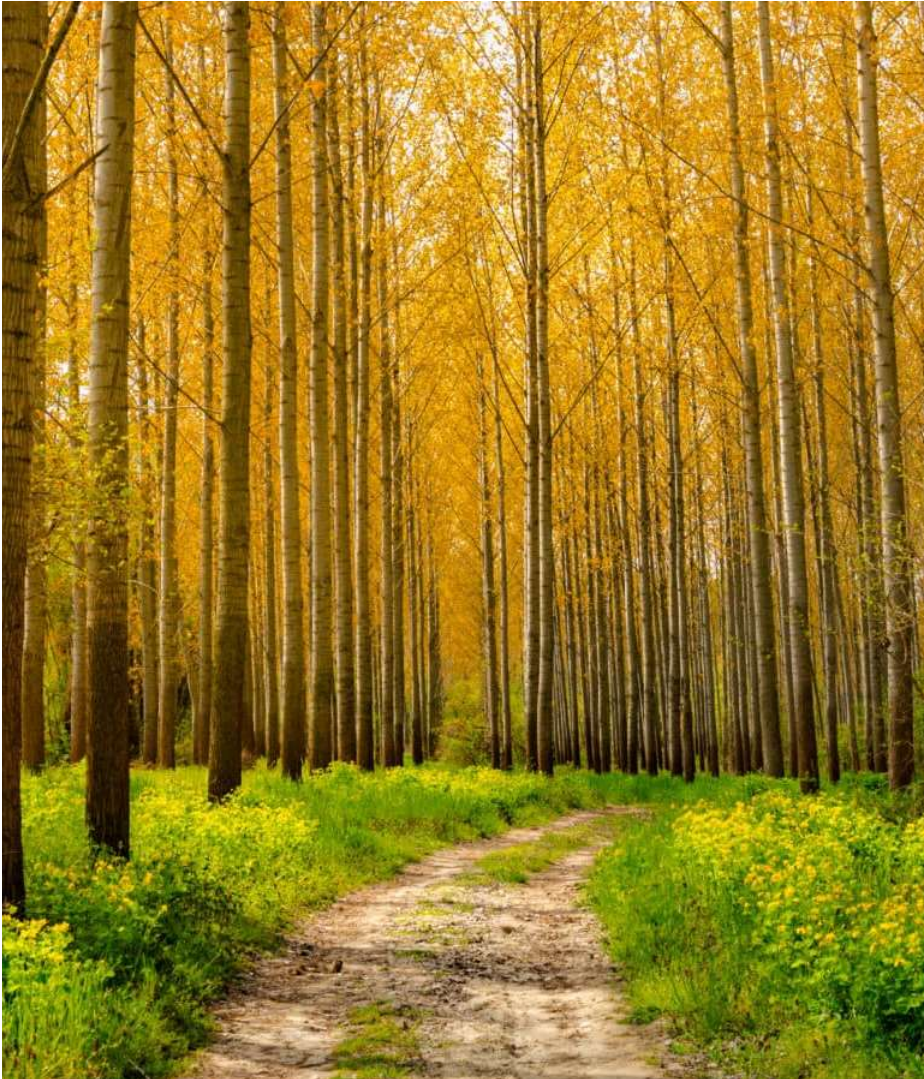
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**Amanda Brumfield**

Research Instructor, Public Policy

Professional Development & Career Coach

Honors Carolina



## Cover letter goals

- Resume explains your skills, but cover letter explains your **WHY**
  - Why that role with that employer
  - Why you're a great fit
- Don't just recap your resume
- Not required? Write one anyway

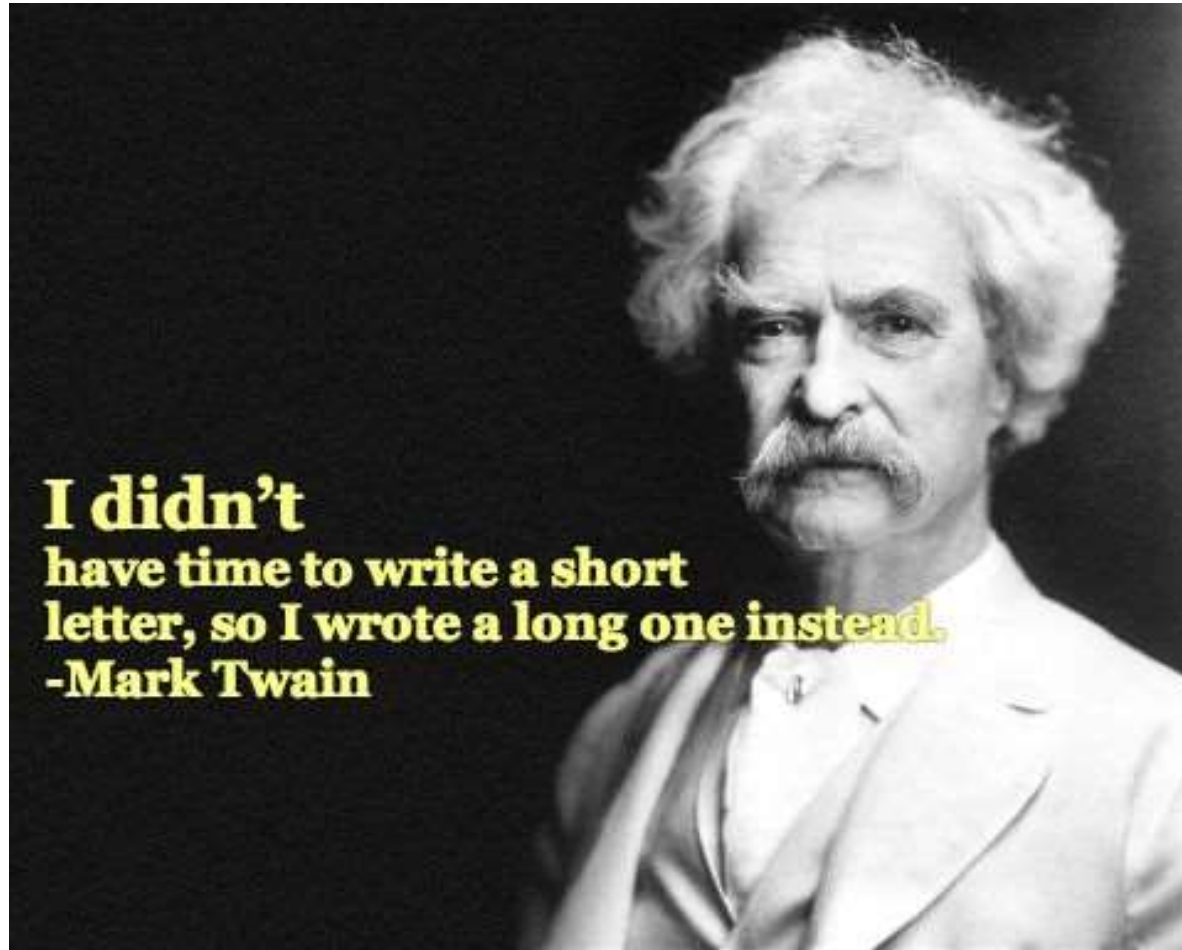


I know many of you have  
written lots of letters

## The reality...

- A badly written, poorly formatted cover letter is a really easy way to get your application thrown out



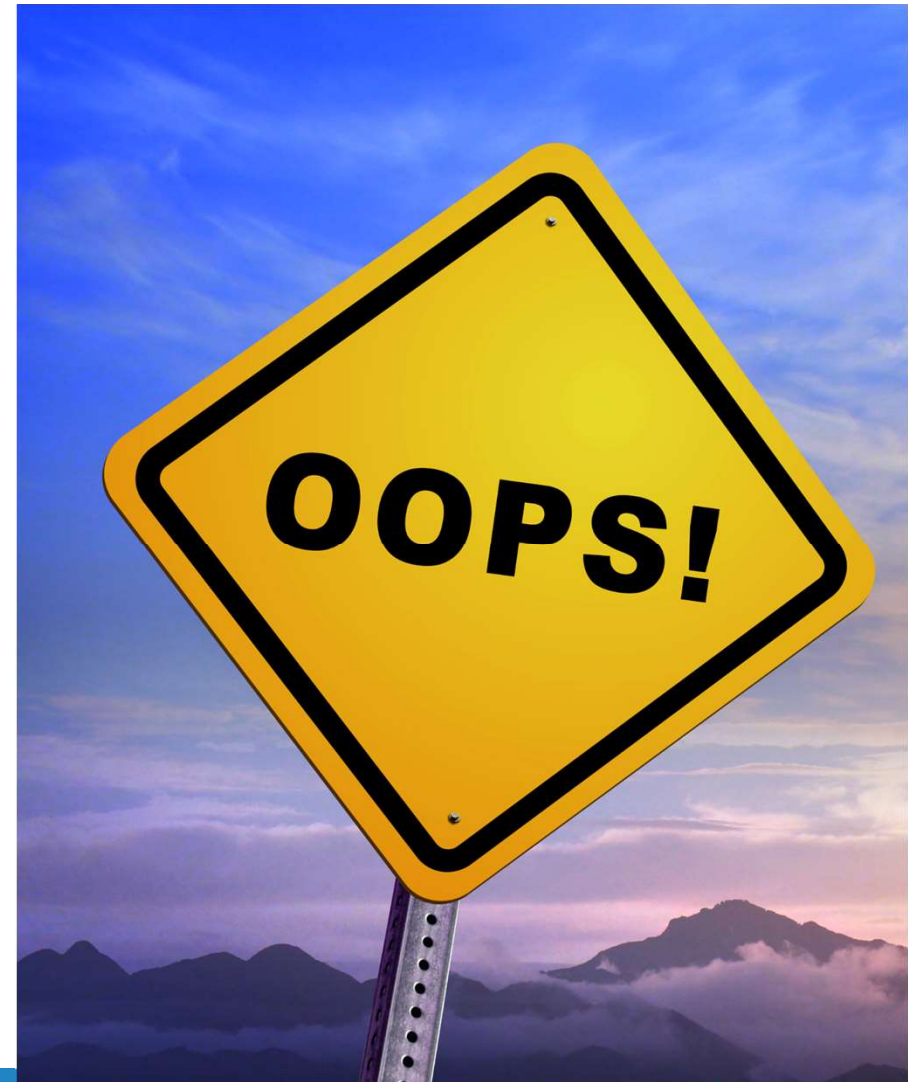


**I didn't  
have time to write a short  
letter, so I wrote a long one instead.  
-Mark Twain**

<https://lh6.ggpht.com/DulMpyokUjlvvr0jOUi7FTXOQzz8T04GZxwOhrbgyulpLjah7t35j9kqwlXrgw8JuSaFZocZiDIgEjGSgg>

## Biggest cover letter mistakes

- Too long
- It's a resume recap
- Not tailored to employer/role
  - *"I'd love to work for your company" ... but you never name the company*
- Poor attention to detail
  - Example: You name the wrong employer



# Cover letters aren't written in a vacuum!

- Don't draft one without a posting in mind
- Each letter is unique
  - But as you write more, you can copy/paste parts from one letter into a new letter

Your name  
Address  
Email  
Phone number

Ms. Jones  
Their title  
Company name  
Company address

Date

Dear [name],

**First Paragraph: Introduction.** 2-4 sentences. First sentence should state the job you're applying to and the company name. You may also want to include how you found it. Next sentence(s) summarize who you are, why you want this job, and why it's a match (basically, "why you, why me, why us"). You may also want to include how you found it. Next sentence(s) summarize who you are, why you want this job, and why it's a match (basically, "why you, why me, why us").

**Middle (1 or 2 paragraphs):** This is the most important section. Ideally 4-5 sentences per paragraph. Explain why you want this position with this employer. Connect the dots about why you're a good fit for this role. Discuss key experiences that gave you the specific skills and knowledge they're looking for, that will enable you to thrive in the role to which you are applying. Demonstrate how selected experiences and achievements make you an outstanding candidate for this role. Do not merely repeat every detail from your resume. They should see mutual growth, how you benefit the company/organization and how they benefit you on your journey. Sell your journey and how the role/company is an important part, using specifics to show that you know them.

**Middle (1 or 2 paragraphs):** This is the most important section. Ideally 4-5 sentences per paragraph. Explain why you want this position with this employer. Connect the dots about why you're a good fit for this role. Discuss key experiences that gave you the specific skills and knowledge they're looking for, that will enable you to thrive in the role to which you are applying. Demonstrate how selected experiences and achievements make you an outstanding candidate for this role. Discuss key experiences that gave you the specific skills and knowledge they're looking for, that will enable you to thrive in the role to which you are applying.

**Last Paragraph:** 2-3 sentences. Re-summarize the fit, reiterate your interest in the job, and thank them for their consideration. No need to state contact info- they have it above. You can also add that they can reach out to you with any questions about your candidacy.

Sincerely,

Your Name

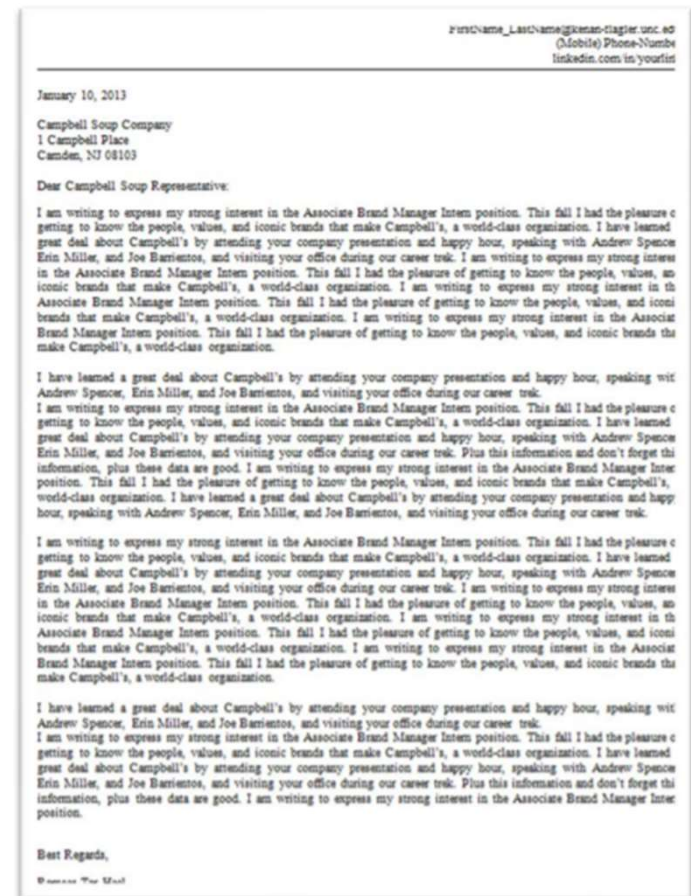


# Consider the visual impact

## Avoid:

- Very long paragraphs
- Too crowded
- Overly fancy (formatting and words) for no reason

Would you want to read this?→



John\_smith@kenan-flagler.unc.edu  
(123) 456-8033  
linkedin.com/in/johnsmith

October 5, 2014

Ms. Katie Preston  
Talent Acquisition Coordinator, Diversity and University Relations  
The Campbell Soup Company  
1 Campbell Place  
Camden, NJ 08103

Dear Ms. Preston:

I am writing to express my strong interest in the Associate Brand Manager Intern position at The Campbell Soup Company. This fall, I had the pleasure of getting to know the people, values, and iconic brands that make Campbell's a world-class organization. I have learned a great deal about your organization by attending your company presentation and happy hour, speaking with Andrew Spencer, Erin Miller, and Joe Barrientos, and visiting your office during our career talk.

I have six years of marketing experience, including three in Consumer Packaged Goods: at Beam Global Spirits & Wine. There, I worked in Regional Marketing, tailoring and executing brand plans throughout the Northeast region. This experience allowed me to develop tools that will enable me to be successful in a career at Campbell's, including:

- **Strong Analytical Skills:** I analyzed Nielsen data, shipment volume, and demographics in order to synthesize actionable trends and gaps to determine the focus of our sales team and consumer promotions. In my discussions with Andrew Spencer, these skills are paramount to the success of a brand manager at Campbell's.
- **Teamwork and Leadership:** By collaborating with colleagues from an array of departments and external partners, I was able to form strong working relationships and successfully gain buy-in from those with different performance measures.
- **Consumer Focused:** Consumer behavior has always been a passion and I consistently strive to develop products or services that consumers will love. Campbell's places consumers at the forefront of the marketing strategy and my prior experience will help me in this endeavor.

I chose UNC Kenan-Flagler to pursue my MBA after working closely with the brand teams at Beam Global and to build my career in brand management. I intend to use my experience, education, and passion to aid Campbell's in continuing to make a difference in consumers' lives.

I would appreciate an opportunity to interview at UNC Kenan-Flagler on January 27, 2015.

Regards,

John Smith


Enclosure

# Alternative formats

## Format – The header(s)

- Make sure your info matches what's on your resume. Same: name, phone, email
- Format address properly- You need to get this right! Other generations will expect it.

123 West Main Street  
Chapel Hill, NC 27502

- Street on its own line
  - Abbreviate state
  - No comma after state
  - At the least, include a date
- 

## Format – The “to” line


- End with comma or colon
  - Name a person, if one is given in the posting
  - **Mr./Ms./Miss/Mrs.?**
    - Use Ms. over Mrs. – Ms. is marriage-neutral
    - Use Dr. or other formal title if you know they have one
    - Unsure of pronouns? Use title
      - “Associate Director Smith”
  - Dear Hiring Committee or Dear Hiring Manager
  - **Never “To whom it may concern”**
-

North Carolina Financial Policy Center  
111 Main St  
Durham, NC 27701

March 1, 2022

Dear Hiring Committee,

Sample Student  
sample@unc.edu  
555-555-5555



ChatGPT gets you maybe  
halfway there, but a human  
still needs to tailor it

+ New chat

Resume: Coaching & La

Resume for User Request.

ChatGPT for Job Applications

Why Students Don't Use Caree

Networking Words.

Clear conversations

Upgrade to Plus **NEW**

Dark mode

Updates & FAQ

Log out

**A** Write me a cover letter for this role: Nonprofit Leadership Internship - Full-time / Part-time.

Responsibilities

- The role and will give an insight into the key skills required to lead and develop a nonprofit organization

- Advocacy Leadership Development - Meet with members of Congress and/or Congressional staffers in your State and District; represent The Borgen Project at various business, political and community events; mobilize individuals to contact their members of Congress in support of key poverty-reduction legislation

3 more items

Benefits

- 

This is a part-time 12-hours per week, unpaid telecommuting internship. Responsibilities: Responsibilities

- 

The role and will give an insight into the key skills required to lead and develop a nonprofit organization

- 

Advocacy Leadership Development - Meet with members of Congress and/or Congressional staffers in your State and District; represent The Borgen Project at various business, political

Tailor the letter more to the role at the Borgen Project, and make the letter shorter

Dear Hiring Manager,

I am writing to express my strong interest in the Nonprofit Leadership Internship role at The Borgen Project. As a highly motivated and dedicated individual, I believe that my skills and experience make me a great fit for this position.

I am currently pursuing a Bachelor of Arts in Sociology with a Minor in Anthropology from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. As an Honors Carolina student and a Dean's List member, I have consistently demonstrated my academic ability and dedication to excellence. Additionally, I recently completed the Honors Abroad London program, where I worked as an intern at a London nonprofit and gained valuable experience in advocacy, fundraising, and marketing.



In my previous role as a Community Outreach Coordinator at the Carrboro Community Health Center, I translated health plans for Spanish-speaking patients and collaborated on HIV/AIDS training for over 30 women. I also provided interpretation services and scheduled appointments as a Volunteer Interpreter/Scheduler. At Room to Read in London, I facilitated readings with groups of students, organized book clubs, and developed marketing materials to promote outreach events. As a Development Volunteer at Miracle Feet, I researched funding opportunities, drafted development materials, and managed the donor database. I also mentored inner-city youth in math, reading comprehension, and critical thinking.

I am excited about the opportunity to work with The Borgen Project and gain insight into the key skills required to lead and develop a nonprofit organization. I am particularly interested in the Advocacy Leadership Development aspect of the role, where I would have the opportunity to meet with members of Congress and mobilize individuals to support key poverty-reduction legislation.

Thank you for considering my application. I am available to start the internship at any time and look forward to the opportunity to discuss my qualifications further.

Sincerely,

[Your Name]

“Make it 1/3 shorter, talk more about the skills the Borgen Project wants and less about my past work”

“Make it funnier”

- I hope this letter finds you in good spirits and with plenty of coffee nearby, because we're about to embark on an adventure together.

# Intro paragraph

- Talk about who you are, why you want job, and why you're a great fit
  - “**why you, why me, why us**”
  - College, major, and year
  - Interest in the employer
  - Interest in that sort of role
  - Summary of your skills
  - Mention personal contact, if you have one
- **Must include employer name and position title**
  - Otherwise, letter reads like you send the same exact thing to every employer, and readers *hate* that



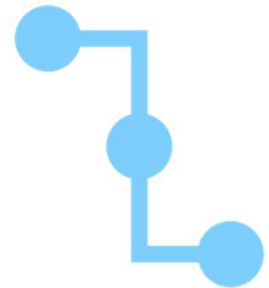
## Intro - What works well?

“I’m extremely interested in becoming a Policy Analyst with ABC Think Tank in summer 2024, after I complete my Master of Public Policy degree at UNC Chapel Hill. As someone who has worked at many organizations focused on X cause, I’m eager to apply that knowledge to the cutting-edge research that ABC Think Tank is doing in this field.



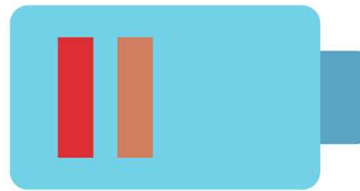
## Middle paragraph(s)

- **Connect dots of how your skills / experiences match what they're looking for**
- Don't just repeat your resume
- Let the posting guide you
- Elaborate on some of the things you touched on in the intro, like your most relevant skills or your interest in the employer
- Connect what you're talking about to things the employer cares about



## Middle – How could this be better?

“Last first summer, I worked for a small think tank, helping them solve problems and conduct research. Additionally, I completed a policy capstone project with a local nonprofit, where I helped them find solutions to their problems. The work was challenging but I enjoyed it.”



## Middle - What works well?

“I’ve gained extensive experience in research and writing during my time at UNC Chapel Hill. In my Master-level courses, I have written succinct, impactful policy briefs that clearly explain complex topics, and I have supported those briefs with extensive, thoughtfully-researched reports. I would look forward to applying those skills in your think tank, further sharpening them while continuing to focus on health care policy, which is an area I especially gravitate toward.”



### **Desired Qualifications**

- Cumulative GPA of 3.0 or higher.
- Strong attention to detail and organizational skills.
- Ability to thoroughly investigate and analyze complex regulatory concepts.
- Proficiency in PowerPoint and Excel.
- Strong writing and editing skills.
- Ability to distill complex issues into accurate and concise messages for regulators and internal or external stakeholders.
- Preference for graduate level work in Public Policy, Environmental Management, Business Administration or related discipline.
- Knowledge of the legal, economic and regulatory framework in which regulated utilities operate.



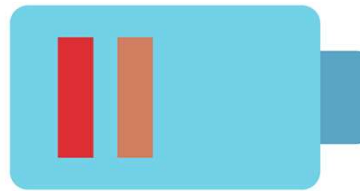
## Closing paragraph

- Short and sweet
- Not the place to add new highly-relevant info for the first time
  - Why: the reader might miss it
- Reiterate your interest in and fit for that particular role and company
- Good place to state your schedule availability, if requested in the job posting
- No need to re-state your contact info, if it's included elsewhere in the letter



## Closing - How could this be better?

“For these reasons, I would be a great fit for your company. Additionally, I am planning to take a class on Data Analysis skills this upcoming semester, which will make me even more qualified for this role. You can reach me at [email] and [phone]. I hope you’ll reach out to me with any questions, and I hope you’ll consider me for this role.”



## Closing - What works well?

“I would be so excited to apply my policy research skills in a fast-paced, supportive environment like X company. Thank you for your consideration, and I hope to hear from you soon.”

