

Cover Letter Checklist

Proofread and Career Advisor Review:

- Once the letter is complete, proofread twice.
- Ask a peer to proofread your resume. If English is your second language, ask a native speaker to review as well.
- Ask your career advisor to review at least one cover letter before applying to internships or jobs.

Overall Appearance:

- One page, 10–12-point font, left justified.
- Appropriate length: approximately $\frac{1}{2}$ to $\frac{3}{4}$ of the page is the body of the letter.
- The letter is a unique, individualized, and written specifically to that recruiter/employer/position.
- Proofread twice: no spelling or grammatical errors, employer and recruiter name is spelled correctly, and the employer name throughout the letter is consistent.
- Varied sentence structure to avoid starting every sentence with “I.”

Your Contact Information and Date:

- Copy the header from your Sanford resume including your name and full contact information.
- The correct date is included, located above the addressed-to block and salutation.

Addressed-to Block and Salutation:

- The addressed-to block is left justified, and includes the full name of the recruiter, title, employer name, and address. (Check the job listing – nearly all postings include this information.)
- Double-check the spelling of the recruiter’s name (check gender if necessary), and employer name.
- The salutation is formatted as follows: “Dear Mr. (or Ms.) Lastname:” Always address the salutation using the recruiter’s last name and use a colon. (Omit the quotation marks above.)
- Do not include the employer phone number, the recruiter’s email address, or a “RE:” in the address block.

Opening Paragraph:

- Indicate you are a student and in which graduate program in the Sanford School, AND/OR indicate your connection to the addressee, who referred you, or mention your related past (and years of) experience.
- Identify the position using the exact job title from the posting and indicate your interest in the employer position.
- Name 1-3 contacts with whom you have networked and what insights you have gained about the employer or position.
- Indicate your interest and identify key relevant skills you bring as a candidate.
- Do not include “My name is . . .” since your letter includes your contact header above and name in the signature below.

Middle Paragraph:

- Required skills: list in order of appearance in the posting; indicate specific and relevant accomplishments that each relate to at least top three required skills.
- Quantify your successes using numbers, figures, or percentages to emphasize achievements, not just tasks.
- Utilize active, accurate, and descriptive action verbs that relate to the skills.
- Desired skills: proceed the same as with required skills; could become a separate paragraph.
- Indicate international experience, industry knowledge, and technical skills, if applicable.

Closing Paragraph:

- Include a thank you to the reader.
- If applying to an on-campus interview, you may indicate “I look forward to meeting you.”
- Close using “Sincerely,” 3-4 blank lines, followed by “name, “degree” Candidate Class of ####, Duke Sanford School of Public Policy” in block format.