Part II: Cover Letter Writing

Cover Letters
A cover letter markets you to employers. It needs to be brief, precise and business-like. Basically, cover letters detail and offer examples of your relevant qualifications and specific requirements sought by the employer.

General Information:
Write to a specific person:
- Use the person’s name and title.
- Make sure the spelling is correct.
- Never use generic salutations "To Whom It May Concern," "Dear Sir or Madam."

Include the following:
- Position you are applying for, and how you learned of the opening.
- Why you are applying for the position, level of interest.
- Explain your qualifications, and how you can contribute to the organization.
- Make reference to your resume but don't repeat the same information.
- State what action you want from them: an interview.

General rules:
- Every resume should be accompanied by a cover letter
- Limit your cover letter to one page; mention your resume is attached
- Use good quality bond white or off white (preferably neutral colored) paper for both the resume and cover letter
- Use a laser printer; sign in blue/black pen
- Check and recheck for spelling and grammar errors; do not rely on spell-check. Get a proofreader with good English
- Seal in a 8 1/2 “ x 11” envelop with typed/printed address labels, and use a conservative stamp
- Immediately send a personal thank you note or card following a meeting or interview with an employer

BAD cover letters have:
- Overall, a poor appearance/cramped; rambling or poorly written text
- Lack focus on how your qualifications are a good match
- Poor grammar, punctuation, spelling, and typos
- “Self-focused” instead of “employer-focused”; aggressive/pushy tone; too many sentences start with “I” (appear self-centered)
Cover Letter Checklist: Self-assessment

Once you have a final draft of your cover letter, use the checklist to ensure completion.

Did you....

☐ Use Microsoft Word?
☐ Type today's date where specified? (top, left aligned)
☐ Enter your contact information at the top? (after date)
☐ Include employer's contact name, title, organization name, and address?
☐ Address letter to a specific person in the organization? (if possible)
☐ Write a salutation with Mr. or Ms. appropriately?

☐ Create 1st Paragraph by:
  ☐ State position for which you are applying and how you learned of it?
  ☐ Briefly state why you are interested in the position? (1-2 sentences?)
  ☐ Mention if a friend or family member in the organization referred you?

☐ Create 2nd Paragraph by:
  ☐ Explain skills, education, and experiences that make you a good fit?
  ☐ Relate your skills, education, and experiences to skills specified?
  ☐ Use confident showing you believe in your own success in this position?

☐ Create 3rd Paragraph by:
  ☐ Briefly demonstrate you have done research on the employer? (e.g. reviewed website or annual report)
  ☐ Matched the cover letter to the particular organization?

☐ Create 4th Paragraph by:
  ☐ Mentioned a desire for an interview to further learn more about this opportunity?
  ☐ State when and how you will follow-up with the employer?
  ☐ Thank them for their attention?

☐ Sign your name underneath "Sincerely,"?
☐ Type your name beneath your Signature?
☐ Use clear and concise language?
☐ Use consistent formatting which complements your resume?
☐ Keep length to one page?
☐ Print on high-quality and the same paper as your resume? (if submitting hard copy)

If you checked every box above, your cover letter is ready to go!

Tip: Visit the BSU Career Center for resume and cover letter review or have a friend with excellent written English skills review your documents!