York University Career Centre

CAREERCYBERGUIDE

Understanding Cover Letters

Purpose of a Cover Letter

- Introduces you to the employer
- Generate employer interest in meeting you personally
- Connect you to a specific position and/or company
- To meet employer in person
- Clarify a controversial aspect of your employment history

Best Practices

- Length
  - one page maximum judicious use of white space to
  - break up blocks of text
- Format
- Use of Language
  - free of ALL grammar/spelling errors
  - appropriate to context

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Anatomy of a Cover Letter

- The '3 paragraph' cover letter
- Introduction
- identify position you are seeking and how you heard it
- why you/why them
- Body
- presenting evidence
- Conclusion
- request an interview
- contact information

Common Shortcomings

- errors: names, company information, grammar, spelling
- failure to identify the position desired
- accomplishments/skills not targeted to specific company or position
- lack of originality—cliches, copying sample materials

Developing Cover Letter Skills

- Online Cover Letter Writing Strategies workshop
- In-house Cover Letter Writing
    - Strategies workshop—
    - *www.yorku.ca/careers/workshops*
- Resume Critique Service
- Online Job Search Manual
- The Career Centre Resource Library

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