

A cover letter is used to communicate your interest in the position you're applying for, explain how your qualifications and experience are a good fit, and demonstrate your writing and communication skills to potential employers.

## WHAT IS TYPICALLY INCLUDED IN A COVER LETTER?

**Introductory Paragraph:** It is recommended that you state the name of the organization and the specific position you're applying for. If you were referred by someone you know, or if you have a personal connection to someone working in the organization, it may be helpful to include their name and the reason they recommended you apply. It's also important to establish a connection between the organization's mission and/or values, and your values. This helps to communicate that you're applying for the position because you're invested in making meaningful contributions that support the company's mission and goals. Next, add a statement about the skills, experience, or qualifications you have, and how you see yourself using them in the role you're applying for as a transition to the body of your cover letter.

**Body Paragraphs:** This section should highlight a few of your most relevant qualifications using examples from your experience. Choose one or two situations to discuss, and include specific details that demonstrate how you acquired or applied the skills you want to highlight. Be sure to clearly state how your skills, education, or experience align with the desired qualifications in the job description, and reinforce how your experience will benefit the employer.

**Closing Paragraph:** Reiterate your excitement about the position, how you can meet the employers needs, state your interest in an interview, and express your appreciation for the employer's time and consideration.

## FORMATTING TIPS

- Cover letters are typically about one page in length
- Use the same heading as your resume and a 12-point font for your cover letter
- Margins should be between 0.75-1.0 inch on all sides
- Address your letter to the hiring supervisor by name, if possible
- Paragraphs are not indented

You can meet with a career advisor to get personalized recommendations, or send your cover letter to [career@plu.edu](mailto:career@plu.edu) to receive suggestions by email!



**How do you know what to highlight in your cover letter?** Using the information in the job description, make a list of the skills, experience, and qualifications needed to perform the job you're applying for, and compare it to the education, skills, and experience you have. This will help you determine what to focus on in the body paragraphs of your cover letter.

## **SAMPLE JOB DESCRIPTION**

### **Lute Investments, Inc.**

**Compliance Analyst, Tacoma, WA**

#### **About Lute Investments**

Lute Investments was founded in Tacoma, WA in 2005 with a focus on investments, accounting, business operation support. The firm has since expanded its services to include information technology, business consulting, and quantitative trading, and is now a leading financial partner and global investment firm in the Puget Sound area.

#### **Compliance Analyst Job Overview**

Our compliance team provides critical support to ensure our clients operate within regulatory requirements. In this full-time position, you will be a key partner in preparing regulatory filings, managing trading and investment processes, and overseeing compliance testing.

#### **Qualifications**

- Bachelor's degree in Business or Finance
- 1-2 years of experience with financial investments, investment company regulatory compliance, or other regulatory experience preferred

#### **Duties & Responsibilities**

- Assist in providing regulatory and policy guidance on compliance and ethics to staff
- Conduct periodic research to identify emerging risks and develop strategies for improved regulatory compliance
- Develop and perform quarterly training, testing, and monitoring exercises
- Assist in the preparation and submission of annual regulatory filings
- Provide administrative support to the Compliance Department, including, but not limited to, records management, systems input, and maintenance of reporting software

#### **Skills**

- Strong written and verbal communication skills
- Outstanding organization and ability to successfully manage multiple projects and priorities
- Demonstrate adaptability, critical thinking skills, and the ability to collaborate effectively
- A minimum of intermediate-level proficiency with Excel is required, along with the ability to learn new technology platforms

# SAMPLE COVER LETTER

**Firstname Lastname**

Tacoma, WA • (253) 555-XXXX • [email@plu.edu](mailto:email@plu.edu)

1

Dear Molly Manager,

2

I recently learned about the opening for a Compliance Analyst with Lute Investments from Alex Smith, and I'm excited to submit my application for consideration. Alex thought my experience in financial services is an ideal fit for this role. I am particularly interested in this position because it aligns with my values of upholding ethics in all facets of my life, and my passion for thinking critically about complex problems and developing innovative solutions. I'm excited by the prospect of applying my skills and experience to maximize returns for stakeholders and Lute Investments.

3

In my role as a Data Solutions Intern at Puget Sound Bank, I acquired a year of experience using Excel to run progress trackers, process data, and validate data accuracy between files. My contributions helped identify inefficiencies in company-wide procedures, and I was invited to lead a team that developed a proposal for improvements to streamline these processes. The changes my team developed helped reduce overtime by 15 percent. I am eager to bring my proactive approach to problem-solving and Excel experience to the Compliance Analyst position.

4

As a Residential Advisor, I enhanced my conflict resolution and communication skills by building relationships with student residents early in the semester. My commitment to authentic communication and developing meaningful relationships supported my ability to navigate interpersonal issues when they arose. In one instance, an argument between two roommates intensified to the extent that one student locked the other out and refused to open the door to their shared room. By leveraging the rapport I had established with both students, I successfully de-escalated the situation and facilitated a resolution that helped them cohabitate amicably for the rest of the semester. I believe the relationship-building skills I developed will help me cultivate relationships with colleagues and clients that will be a great asset as a Compliance Analyst.

5

Thank you for taking the time to review my application materials. I am eager to bring my energy, enthusiasm, and analytical skills to Lute Investments. Please feel free to contact me at [name@plu.edu](mailto:name@plu.edu) or 123-456-7890. I look forward to the opportunity to learn more about the compliance analyst position and discuss how my background and skills align with the needs of your department.

Sincerely,  
Lance Lute

## KEY

**1 Greeting:** The letter is personally addressed to the person responsible for reviewing applications for the position.

**2 Introduction:** The opening paragraph includes the name of the company and corresponding job title, the name of the person that referred the applicant, and clearly states the connection between the company's values and the applicant's. It also introduces some of the skills, in this case critical thinking and problems-solving, that will be discussed in the following paragraph.

**3 Body:** The sample job description highlights the need for strong problem-solving abilities and intermediate Excel skills in the compliance analyst position. This paragraph draws from the applicant's internship experience to demonstrate how they used Excel to develop process improvements, and emphasizes the impact of the improvements, which was reducing overtime.

**4** The job description notes that strong written and verbal communication skills are important in the compliance analyst position. The second body paragraph includes a situation from the applicant's work experience with specific details about the way they used verbal communication skills to build relationships and resolve a conflict.

**5 Closing:** The last paragraph includes a statement thanking the reviewer, recaps the skills and experience the applicant would bring to the organization, and reinforces the applicant's enthusiasm and interest in the position. It also clearly states what the desired next steps are, which is the opportunity to discuss the position further in an interview.

## TIPS

- Research the organization and the position for which you are applying to help you understand the needs of the company and how your skills and experience align with the position you're applying for.
- Address the cover letter to the recruiter or hiring manager by name, if possible. Personalizing the letter demonstrates that you took the time to research the organization.
  - If the job posting does not include a name, try calling the company to find out who will be reviewing applications, or search for the company on LinkedIn.
  - If you're unable to find out the name of the person responsible for hiring, you could use the director's name for the department the role you're applying for falls under.
  - If you cannot identify a specific person to address the letter to, use "Dear Hiring Manager".
- Avoid simply listing skills you have or restating what's on your resume.
- Always submit a cover letter with your resume, unless the employer explicitly states that they don't want one. Taking time to write a cover letter helps to demonstrate your interest in the position, and serves as a sample of your writing ability.
- If you're applying for an internship, be sure to mention how it fits into your future goals and plans.
- Proofread! Reading aloud can help you identify errors & ensure your writing flows well.