



CRACKING THE COVER LETTER

Cover letters are a part of job, internship, and practicum applications that always tripped me up. As soon as I saw the words “cover letter”, I felt stuck because I didn’t know where to begin. Unfortunately, as a graduate student, cover letters are an unavoidable part of my life. Many graduate school, practicum, and job applications later, however, I finally feel like I have some strategies to write a solid cover letter.

When I sit down to write a cover letter, I start by thinking about what drew me to the job advertisement in the first place. What caught my attention? Why did it seem like someplace that I would want to work? After I introduce myself, I answer these questions for the employer, but also for myself.

Then I tackle what for me is one of the hardest parts of a cover letter: talking about my strengths and experience. When I do, I feel uncomfortable, even narcissistic. I’ve found that a way to navigate this problem is to talk about how my experiences fit in with the job description and the company’s mission.

The last thing that I always make sure to include in my cover letters are the things I can’t or won’t compromise on, such as my availability or the minimum amount of hours I need or can commit to.

I used to put off writing cover letters, because I had no concrete way to get started. Now, these three strategies provide that for me, and perhaps, if you are feeling stuck the next time you need to write a cover letter, they might help you.

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