

# Writing and Securing Effective Letters for Fellowships and Awards



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# Two Important Kinds of Letters

## Cover Letter

- Written by you
- Make connections between you/your work and the organization/fellowship

## Letters of Recommendation

- Written by others about you
- Help organization trust your sincerity and ability to succeed



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# Cover Letters: What Should I Write?

Also known as a “letter of introduction” or “letter of application,” a **cover letter** accompanies your application and should answer the following questions:

## How do you meet the criteria for this award/fellowship?

Skills/abilities/qualities in the context of your experiences as they relate to the specified requirements.

## How do you/does your work align with our organization?

What is it about the organization’s mission/values/projects/services that makes you want to work for/with THEM in THIS way? How does/do the mission/values/projects align with your values/career goals/research interests?



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Name (Optional)  
Your Present Address  
City, State, Zip Code

Today's Date

Person's Name  
Title  
Organization  
Street Address  
City, State, Zip Code

Dear Name/Title:

**1st Paragraph: Introduction.** Greet the reader and inform him or her of the position title and area/department to which you are applying. Reference how you found the position or who referred you to apply. Summarize your intention and reason for submitting yourself as a candidate. Transition into the next paragraph.

**2nd and/or 3rd Paragraph: Qualifications and Fit.** Help the employer see how your qualifications and experiences meet the needs of the position. Mention specific qualifications that you believe will be of greatest interest to the organization, slanting your remarks toward addressing specified requirements needed for success in the position. Do not simply restate your résumé. Rather, summarize your most relevant skills and experiences as they relate to the employer's needs. Help the employer see how you are a strong fit for the organization's culture by highlighting what interests you about the mission, vision, values, and/or projects and services. Emphasize how you would like to contribute your qualifications to benefit the organization.

**Final Paragraph: Conclusion.** Close by making a request for an opportunity to talk with the employer and include your contact information. If you intend to follow up with an email or phone call, you may say so here. If your request is not concerning an interview, but more information about the organization and current job openings, you can request the information be sent electronically. Prior to requesting this information, make sure it is not readily available on the organization's website. Include your contact information and any preferences for how you prefer to be contacted. Thank the employer for their consideration of your application materials.

Complimentary Close (such as "Sincerely" or "Best Regards"),

*Your Handwritten Signature*

Your typed name



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# Research: Tailor Your Cover Letter

- Organization websites
- Announcements/instructions
- Google/Bing search
- Organization information sites:
  - Hoovers.com
  - Vault.com
  - Glassdoor.com
  - Career.fsu.edu (Career Library)
- Career Library
- Information Interviews (ProfessioNole)

**Mission**

**Needs**

**Values**

**Projects**



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105 Seminole Lane, #100  
Tallahassee, FL 32304  
September 23, 2015

Intro

Mary Ross  
Human Resources Manager  
Guess, Inc.  
1444 South Alameda Street  
Los Angeles, CA 90021

Dear Ms. Ross:

I am interested in the Spring 2016 Merchandising or Retail Buying internship in California or New York with Guess, Inc., which was advertised on the Guess website. I feel my experience in retail sales and customer relations, combined with my courses in retail merchandising and product management at Florida State University, make me a strong candidate for an internship position with Guess, Inc.

Qualified?

In reading the position description, I understand that this internship requires past experience and knowledge in retail. My work experiences include positions in three separate Express stores, where I received several awards for outstanding sales performance. My work at Express also helped me develop a greater understanding of customer relations. In addition, the Retail Merchandising and Product Management program at Florida State has taught me valuable skills in business administration and management. I would very much like to contribute the knowledge and skills I gained through these experiences to serve customers as a member of the Guess, Inc. team.

Fit?

What draws me most to your organization is the success of Guess, Inc.'s ability to merge European and American style into a unique branding concept. I feel that working for an organization that transforms opposing global perspectives into iconic fashion would allow me to build my skills portfolio while working toward my long-term career goal of managing the buying division of an international fashion label. It would be an honor to work alongside individuals with goals and passions that mirror my own.

Open Dialogue

I would appreciate the opportunity to discuss how my experiences would benefit Guess. I will follow up via email in the next week. Should you need to contact me, I can be reached via phone at (850) 474-7214 or email at abc12d@fsu.edu. Thank you for your time and consideration.



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Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Joanne Taylor".

Joanne Taylor

# What are Letters of Recommendation?

A formal letter written by a professional contact (not your family or friend) who can speak to your abilities, potential, and/or deservingness:

- Professor
- Manager/Supervisor
- Professional Mentor
- Colleague



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# How to Choose a Recommender

- Is this person a PROFESSIONAL contact?
- Can this person speak to your skills, abilities, character, and or/potential for success?
- Do you have a strong relationship with this person?
- Is this person willing to write a recommendation for you?
- Is this person able to write the recommendation for you by the deadline?



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# Activity

Brainstorm one or two individuals who might serve as strong recommenders for you RIGHT NOW:

Recommender Info	Example
Name/Title of Prospect #1:	Dr. Bill Jones, Associate Professor of English
How long have you known?	2 years
How well do you know?	Taken 3 of his classes, worked with him on an undergraduate research project, he previously nominated me for a departmental award
Knowledge, skills, abilities or achievements to which this person can attest?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Writing, critical thinking, &amp; independent research skills</li><li>• A's in all of his classes</li><li>• In previous nomination, he stated that I was extremely personable, dependable, &amp; motivated – a “high achiever”</li></ul>
Any potential obstacles?	He is scheduled to be on sabbatical for the spring semester. He may not be responding to e-mail.



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# Cultivating Recommendations

- **Build and maintain relationships**
  - Make contact outside of class (faculty)
  - Share information frequently (articles, web-links)
  - Keep contacts updated on your life and progress
  - Utilize social media when appropriate (LinkedIn)
- **Prove your skills/character**
  - Perform well– get results (grades, deadlines, quality work)
  - Volunteer for projects/ leadership
  - Attend to professionalism behaviors



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# Cultivating Recommendations Cont.

- **Communicate your interests**
  - Talk about your research
  - Ask questions about shared interests
  - Discuss career goals



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# Asking for the Recommendation

## Ask in-person if possible

- Communicates respect
- Allows you to show your sincerity and appreciation

## Structure of the ask:

1. “Thank you for seeing me today”
2. Remind the recommender of your goal
3. Tell them why you selected them (relationship, what you feel they can speak to)
4. “I would like to ask if you would feel comfortable providing a recommendation for me...”
5. Offer to provide any additional helpful information (ask what that might be)
6. Thank them again, regardless of the answer



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# Securing the Recommendation

## Make the process easy for the recommender

- Share information about the school/program
- Share copies of your CV, cover letter
- Clarify deadline and submission procedures
- Ask what else you might provide that could be helpful (i.e. recommendation template)
- Politely follow up periodically (not too frequently) prior to the deadline



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**University of North Carolina- Charlotte**

Department of Organizational Science  
9201 University City Blvd  
Charlotte, NC, 28223

[Date]

Dear Admissions Committee,

I am writing today to recommend John Smith as a candidate for the University of North Carolina-Charlotte's doctoral program in Organizational Science Psychology. I came to know John as he completed his bachelor's coursework in psychology from 2014-2016 at Florida State University where I serve as both faculty and Chair of the Department of Psychology. Over the course of John's time at FSU, I was able to observe and interact with him through traditional classroom experiences, his participation in and leadership as President of Psi Chi National Honor Society, and his work with me on two extra-curricular research projects. [Please add any additional items you feel describe our relationship here]

[Qualities/Skills paragraph – May include your thoughts/reflections of any of any experiences in which you observed the demonstration of skills or qualities that would contribute to my success as a doctoral candidate. Please feel free to review my resume/CV if that is helpful]

[Character/Potential Paragraph

- Thoughts/opinions of my ability to do doctoral level coursework/research
- Thoughts/opinions about my general character and how I might be an asset to the department of Psychology]

It is for these reasons that I feel John Smith would be an excellent candidate for admission to the University of North Carolina-Charlotte's Ph.D. program in Organizational Science. If you have any questions, or would like clarification/elaboration regarding any of the items discussed in this letter, please do not hesitate to contact me at via the information below.

Best Regards,

Jane Doe, Ph.D.  
Associate Professor, Department of Psychology  
Florida State University, Tallahassee FL

Phone: (555) 123-4567  
Email: [jdoe@fsu.edu](mailto:jdoe@fsu.edu)



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