Outline

1. Logistics
2. Resume issues
3. Cover letter
4. Peer Review
Logistics

http://www.ics.uci.edu/~dramanan/teaching/ics139w_fall14/schedule.html

System: I urge folks to use Sourceforge (be prepared to analyze the system)
Resumes

What if you don’t have any work experiences?

Volunteer experiences
  Notable “projects”

Be creative but thoughtful!
Cover letters

Compliments your resume (provides relevant detail)

Illustrates your communication skills

Often the first document an employer sees, so it matters

(might be in e-mail form)
What is goal?

Convince skimmer and skeptic to hire you

20-second test still (more-or-less) applies
In-class exercise

(1) Split into groups again, with a recorder and presenter
(2) Discuss and come up with (at least 3) critiques of cover-letter handout
(4) Suggest a solution / rewording for each

Most freedom

First law
Adapt to your audience.

Most constraints

Second law
Maximize the signal/noise ratio.

Third law
Use effective redundancy.
It should not be your resume in letter form

- It should extend key points in your resume
- It should use concrete examples
- It should link those examples to the target position
Dear Ms. Lockridge:

After speaking with Emily Richards about her past summer in the internship program, I am very interested in your Human Resources Summer Internship position. I worked with employee benefits this past summer and became very interested in the human resources aspect. I have obtained many leadership opportunities while working as a Business Writing Consultant Assistant Coordinator at Purdue’s Writing Lab that would be valuable in a career at Uline.

As Business Writing Consultant Assistant Coordinator at Purdue’s Writing Lab, my primary role is to help train new tutors for the Writing Lab. I work directly with the Business Writing Coordinator teaching classes and participating in mock tutorials to allow students to obtain hands-on experience tutoring business documents. I also organize educational workshops to refresh the skills of current Business Writing Consultants. My position as a Boiler Gold Rush Team Leader also challenged me to use my enthusiastic personality to motivate incoming freshmen to be involved in campus activities. As a Human Resources Intern at Uline, I could use all of these leadership skills while learning more about recruiting and hiring practices.

Thank you for considering me for this position. I would love to discuss these and other qualifications with you. If you have any questions, please call me at 765-450-7583 or e-mail me at slo@purdue.edu.

Sincerely

Stacy Lolkus

Enclosure: Résumé
Make sure you address the letter to a specific person if possible (preferably the interviewer)

Dear Ms. Lo:
Purpose:

• Introduce yourself
• Explain purpose of letter (what position are you looking for)
• Explain how you came to know of this position
• Explain why interested in the position or the company
  • Culture?
  • Approach?
• Preview the rest of the letter
After speaking with Emily Richards about her past summer in the internship program, I am interested in your Human Resources Summer Internship position. I worked with employee benefits this summer and became interested in the human resources aspect of the position.
Middle Paragraphs

• Highlight skills and benefits to the company
• Emphasize interest in the company
• Provide concrete evidence
  • Show don’t tell (use information from resume)
  • Include specific, credible examples of qualifications for the position
• Begin paragraphs with topic sentences
As a banking representative at Chase, I provided quality customer service while promoting the sale of products to customers. I also handled close to $20,000 each day and was responsible for balancing the bank’s ATM machine. My experience with customer relations and money management can help your accounting firm expand its Middle East division located in Dubai.

Body of letter can be more than one paragraph

If there are multiple paragraphs, make sure

1. Each has a clear topic
2. Ordering makes sense
Tone

• Avoid cliches “I think outside the box”, “I am a team player”,....

• Use an appropriate level of formality
Language

Weak:

I worked as a ramp agent at Comair.

Strong:

As a ramp agent, I assisted in loading baggage, oversaw fueling the aircraft, and stocked commissary items on the aircraft.
Conclusion

I would like to discuss these and other qualifications with you to further explain how I can contribute to your Middle East operations. I look forward to meeting you soon. If you have any questions, please call me at 555-555-5555 or e-mail me at abcd@uci.edu.
Other hints

Be specific and simple and concise

Roughly speaking, less than 150 words
Editing for conciseness

http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/572/01/

One of the biggest differences between spoken language and written text

Basic approach: interrogate every word in a sentence

Does it contribute to making your reader understand the goal of the cover letter?
Editing for conciseness

Avoid overusing noun forms of verbs

**Wordy:** The function of this department is the *collection* of accounts. (10 words)

**Concise:** This department collects accounts. (4 words)
Editing for conciseness

Change phrases into single-words and adjectives

**Wordy:** The employee with ambition...

**Concise:** The ambitious employee...

**Wordy:** We read the letter we received yesterday and reviewed it thoroughly.

**Concise:** We thoroughly reviewed the letter we received yesterday.
Editing for conciseness

Change unnecessary that, who, and which clauses into adjectives

Wordy: The system that is most efficient and accurate... (8 words)

Concise: The most efficient and accurate system... (6 words)

Wordy: The report, which was released recently... (6 words)

Concise: The recently released report... (4 words)
Editing for conciseness

Combine Sentences

Wordy: Ludwig's castles are an astounding marriage of beauty and madness. By his death, he had commissioned three castles. (18 words)

Concise: Ludwig's three castles are an astounding marriage of beauty and madness. (11 words)

Wordy: The supposed crash of a UFO in Roswell, New Mexico aroused interest in extraterrestrial life. This crash is rumored to have occurred in 1947. (24 words)

Concise: The supposed 1947 crash of a UFO in Roswell, New Mexico aroused interest in extraterrestrial life. (16 words)
Editing for conciseness

Eliminate redundant determiners and modifiers

**Wordy:** Any *particular type* of dessert is fine with me. (9 words)

**Concise:** Any dessert is fine with me. (6 words)

“Filler” words to watch out for

- kind of
- sort of
- type of
- really
- basically
- for all intents and purposes
- definitely
- actually
- generally
- individual
- specific
- particular

Redundant pairs to watch out for

- various differences
- true facts
- important essentials
- future plans
- end result
- final outcome
- free gift
- past history
- unexpected surprise
- sudden crisis
- large in size
- often times
- heavy in weight
Editing for conciseness

Eliminate round-about expressions

- "because," "since," "why" =
  - the reason for
  - for the reason that
  - owing/due to the fact that
  - in light of the fact that
  - considering the fact that
  - on the grounds that
  - this is why

- "must," "should" =
  - it is crucial that
  - it is necessary that
  - there is a need/necessity for
  - it is important that
  - cannot be avoided

- "can" =
  - is able to
  - has the opportunity to
  - has the capacity for
  - has the ability to

- "may," "might," "could" =
  - it is possible that
  - there is a chance that
  - it could happen that
  - the possibility exists for
Conciseness checklist

http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/572/1/
E-mail cover letters

Same format as standard cover letter, but typically shorter

Do not waste subject line

- Should clearly state the specific job for which you are applying
  - e.g., “Bilingual CPA seeks account manager position”

Make notice of any search keywords
Grading Rubric

Audience awareness
Resume and cover letter are targeted to the particular position and company, and do not look "boiler-plate". Both documents highlight experience and skills relevant to the employer. The objective in the resume is specific and user-focused, not vague and applicant-focused. The cover letter addresses any gaps/issues in the resume that may concern an employer.

Development and Structure
The layout of the resume highlights strengths (coursework, skills, a/or jobs) particular to the individual. The resume has standard sections (objective, education, work experience, and contact information). Cover letter has an introduction, main body, and conclusion. The main topic of each paragraph is easily identifiable, and follows a natural and logical progression. The main body highlights or identifies concrete examples of relevant information not present in the resume.

Language and style
The prose is concise, with perfect grammar and spelling. Both the resume and cover letter should use strong action verbs (http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/543/02/). Both the resume and cover letter should use consistent, parallel language, particularly when describing job responsibilities. Sentences are written in a consistent tense (http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/601/04/). The prose in the cover letter has a formal business tone.
Peer-review

You will work in groups of 4. Why?

• It's easier to learn to improve other people's writing before applying the same principles to your own.
• You will learn to seeing how others read your work; where they are confused, bored, or distracted.
• One person's reaction might be strange, but when a group reacts the same way, it's easier to accept flaws.
•"I felt the most important idea of the second paragraph was to highlight the teamwork skills from the author's past work experiences."
•"At the end of paragraph A, I was happy, but but the time I got to sentence 3 of paragraph B, where it says that a machine register has a weight that is equal to the number of resources it consumes, I felt that I no longer understood what was going on.”
•“I don’t understand the distinction between an ‘argument’ and a ‘parameter’.”
Approach

• When being discussed, don't speak.
• Mimics the initial job application process. Written documents (e.g., resumes + cover letters) must speak for themselves.
• Gives you a chance to listen and take notes without focusing on a response (natural tendency)
• "There is something intense and sensitive about having one’s work discussed". It is hard to hear and remember everything that is said. So take notes.
• Good discussions may spend 45 minutes on a few sentences. Don’t be afraid to dig in!
Resume + cover-letter specifics

Awareness of audience: “skimmers” and “skeptics”
Development and structure: resume layout, cover-letter structure, paragraph topics
Language and style: strong action verbs, parallel language, professional tone, editing for conciseness