

Cover Letter & Interview Guide

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UPDATE: 2019

Cover Letter Format

Your name
Address
Phone

Today's date

Name of potential employer
Name of human resources contact
Title of their position
Address

Dear

The first paragraph of your cover letter should introduce yourself and explain how you became aware of the position and your interest in it. You might briefly describe how your strengths fit that position.

In one or two paragraphs, highlight your strengths and address how you meet the needs of the open position as advertised. Relate your education, qualifications and experience to the job.

The last paragraph should briefly recap your interest in the position and why you are a qualified applicant. There should also be the expectation of a next step, such as "I look forward to hearing from you" or "I can be reached at..." or "I would like to make an appointment to come talk with you personally."

Sincerely,

(Leave room for your signature)

Cover Letter Tips

The cover letter, whether mailed with a printed resume or emailed with a resume attached, is your opportunity to connect your strengths with the potential employer's needs.

Before you start your cover letter, prepare by asking yourself these questions:

Why am I a good fit for this position?

What strengths do I possess to make me a good candidate for this position?

How do my interests, skills, education, experience match with the job description or advertisement?

Your cover letter should be no more than one page. Keep it simple.

Ask someone to proofread your cover letter for grammar, spelling and content.

If possible, format your cover letter similarly to your resume, using the same margins, font, logo, stationary, etc.

McGraw-Hill (Eds). (2007). *Resumes for nursing careers* (3rd ed.). New York, NY: Author.

This book owned by the SON Library, call number W 21 R436 2007, includes a number of examples of cover letters for numerous positions in health care, most of which can be modified for a new nursing graduate.

These websites offer good advice and examples for creating nursing cover letters.

Linfield College. (2019). *Cover letters for nursing*. Retrieved from <http://www.linfield.edu/portland/student-life/career-resources/resume-pdx.html>

RGO Resume Technologies. (2016). *Nursing cover letter samples*. Retrieved from <https://resumegenius.com/resume/entry-level-nurse-resume-sample>

Yale School of Nursing. (n.d.). *Nursing cover letter made easy*. Retrieved from http://nursing.yale.edu/sites/default/files/nursing_cover_letter_made_easy_0.pdf

Interview Tips

Organize your credentials and paperwork

Create a check off list to make sure you have all the documentation you need each time you interview. Make sure your resume is professional and current. Include up to date certifications, credentials, CPR cards, licenses, board scores or passage, driver's license, immunization, Nursing skills checklists, references, 5-7 years of previous addresses for background checks and identification documents. Bring originals and 2-3 copies of each.

Investigate the agency where you are applying

Check their website, pick up literature, or make contacts with staff to learn as much as you can about the goals, mission, philosophy, corporate culture, procedures and management of the institution.

Prepare for the questions you may be asked

Several websites list possible interview questions for nurses, including these:

Lippincott Williams & Wilkins. (2019). *65 interview questions for nurses*. Retrieved from: https://journals.lww.com/nursing/Fulltext/2003/01001/65_interview_questions_for_nurses.13.aspx

Nurse.org. (2019). *31 Sample Nursing Interview Questions With Answer Guide*. Retrieved from <https://nurse.org/articles/nurse-behavioral-interview-questions-answers/>

Salisbury University. (2019). *Nursing interview questions*. Retrieved from <http://www.salisbury.edu/careerservices/students/Interviews/Nursing.html>

Gwynedd Mercy University. (2019). *Common interview questions for nurse interviews with answers*. <https://www.gmercyu.edu/academics/learn/nursing-interview-questions>

One way to prepare for your interview is to compile a list of questions that you think could be asked. Write the question on the front of an index card and write out a complete answer on the back. Or compile your questions and answers in a Word document. Practice your questions and answers in front of a mirror or with another person. Make sure your answers are your own, reflective of your own personality and experience, not what you guess the interview might want to hear. After each interview, add any new questions you were asked to your collection and prepare answers for next time.

Prepare a list of questions to ask your interviewer

Practice

Practice answering your prepared questions out loud in front of a mirror until you are confident in your answers. Set up a mock interview with a friend, family member, instructor, colleague or other student.

Look professional

Your interviewer will assess your professional appearance quickly. How you dress, your attitude, how you present yourself, make eye contact, shake hands, etc. will all make an impact on your interview.

Don't wear jeans or athletic shoes. Make sure your hair is neat and trimmed and nails are clean and clipped. Your clothes should be clean and pressed and in neutral colors. Anything appropriate to going out to a club would not be appropriate for an interview, no matter what you paid for it or how good it looks on you. Suits, not scrubs, are ideal, but if you are a new nurse or if you are applying for an entry-level position, you may be able to get by with a shirt and tie with slacks for men, or dress pants (or tailored skirt) and a blouse for women. Avoid strong fragrances. Wear a watch.

Sound professional

Make sure your phone messages are clear, polite and professional. Make sure your presence in any social media context you are a part of presents you in a positive and professional light, including your profiles, posts and tags. Potential employers will check those.

Another link that might be helpful:

Impollonia, M. (2004). *How to impress nursing recruiters to get the job you want*. Retrieved from http://www.nsna.org/portals/0/skins/nsna/pdf/imprint_jan04_impollonia.pdf

For examples of resumes, cover letters & interview tips, look in the W 21 section of the Library.

Additional employment resources can be found on the Graham network in the Employment folder on the common drive.

Interview Questions You Might Want To Ask

How would you describe a typical week/day in this position?

Is it possible to have a look around the unit?

What are the responsibilities of this post?

How long have most nurses been on the unit?

Why did the last person in this position leave and when?

Who does this position report to? (Ask to meet the supervisor.)

What have been this unit's most notable successes and failures over the year?

What is the nurse-to-patient ratio?

Is there support staff on the unit to assist nurses?

How much input do nurses have regarding systems, equipment and the care environment?

How long are your shifts -- 8, 10 or 12 hours?

How do you go about scheduling? Is self-scheduling an option?

How much autonomy do nurses have to make decisions regarding patient care?

What are the top 2 to 3 qualities of the most successful nurses currently working here?

What professional development opportunities are available to nurses?

Can you describe the orientation process?

Do you have a preceptorship or mentor program?

Will my orientation take place during the shift I will be working?

What are your expectations of new hires during their first six months on the job?

What are the prospects for growth and advancement?

Describe typical first year assignments.

How is the position evaluated?

How do you motivate employees?

How are nurses kept informed about new initiatives, projects, and events happening within the organization?

Why should I want to work here?

How is patient satisfaction measured here and what were the most recent results?

What is the turnover rate of the nursing staff?

What is the management style of the company? Of the supervisor?

What do other nurses love about working here? What concerns, if any, have they raised recently?

In your opinion, what makes this organization a great place to work?

What makes this facility unique among others in this region?

What steps do you take to ensure safe working conditions?

What are your plans for future growth?

Is the administration open to suggestions that would improve patient care?

What challenges is this facility facing?

Is overtime expected? How often?

Will I be on call if I accept this position? If so, what are the conditions/requirements of on-call duty?

What is the next stage of the interview process for this position?

How soon do you expect to make a hiring decision and when will the new person to start working?

Questions Asked of Recent Graham Graduates at Interviews

Why should we choose you over someone with more experience? What do you have to offer they don't?

How would you deal with a rude doctor/patient?

Recall a difficult situation and how you handled it.

Why should we hire you?

Do you have any questions for me?

Who is your biggest critic and why? ---*A good answer, that I used, is MYSELF.

If you were an animal, what would it be and why?

What do you think of this organization?

What is your biggest weakness.

Where do you see you self in 5 years?

What's the ideal unit for you?

What's one time you went above and beyond for your patient?

What are three words your peers would use to describe you?

What's a weakness of yours

And Their Advice

BE EARLY AND READY!!!

DRESS UP!!!

I had several role playing sessions. I was the RN and the panel committee were patient, family, etc. The CEO was a participant. Be prepared.

Many new graduates have a job criteria of their own. If they do not get what they want they get mad, refuse job, etc. Words from my mouth often----YOU take what THEY give you and WORK with it. A JOB is better than NO JOB!!

Question from student: What do you expect from your nurses?

Questions That Might Be Asked of You During An Interview

What's your most important achievement as a student?

When do you plan to take your NCLEX? Have you taken a course to prepare for it?

What was your favorite clinical experience? Least favorite? Why?

What types of charting systems have you used? Likes? Dislikes?

Have you worked with an electronic medication administration record? Bar coding?

What new technology have you used in school?

What type of nursing experience do you have?

Do you have any plans for further education?

What have you done since graduation?

What skills did you do in clinical?

Have you ever been fired or asked to resign?

What would a background check on you show?

Please tell me about yourself.

Would you describe yourself as organized?

What goals do you have in your career?

How do you plan to achieve these goals?

Name 3 words to describe yourself.

What motivates you?

How would you deal with a doctor who was rude?
What professional journals do you subscribed to & how do they affect your practice?
What professional organizations do you belong to?
How have you participated in the professional organizations you belong to?
How do you keep up with the latest information in your field?
What's your most important professional achievement?
Who are your career role models and why?
Can you give an example of a time you were a leader?
Can you give some examples of your problem-solving skills?
How do you handle a request you disagree with?
What are your goals in terms of going back to school, certifications, management?
What do you find difficult about being a nurse?
What do you find most rewarding about being a nurse?
What do you think it takes to be successful in this career?
What made you choose nursing as a career?
How has your training prepared you for a nursing career?
How do you handle pressure?
What is your greatest strength?
What is your greatest weakness?
Where do you see yourself 6 months from now? In three years? 5 years?
What does patient centered care mean to you?
How would you handle a family or patient who is displeased with your patient's care.
How would you handle a patient who complains about everything?
What do you feel you contribute to your patients?
Describe a time when you had to intervene for a patient. What was the outcome?
How would you handle 2 difficult clients at the same time?
How do you motivate patients?
What would you do if you were caring for an alert patient who was suddenly confused and disoriented?
How would you describe your role in a recent code?
How would you handle a situation in which you couldn't read a prescriber's orders?
How will you deal with difficult patients and/or their families?
How will you handle unexpected circumstances, such as being short staffed or needing To perform a treatment you have not done before?
Tell me about your most difficult patient.
If you make an error charting, how do you fix it?
Did you ever have a situation "go bad"?
What attracts you to this facility? To this position?
What aspect of our mission statement appeals to you the most?
What previous job was the most satisfying and why?
What job was the most frustrating and why?
Tell me about the best boss you ever had. Why did you like working for him/her?
Tell me about the worst boss you ever had. What made it tough to work for him/her?
How much supervision do you want or need?

What is the best thing a previous employer did that you wish everyone did?
When taking on a new task, do you like to have a great deal of feedback and responsibility at the outset, or do you prefer to try your own approach?
How do you set priorities in your work?
Do you have any time-management tricks other nurses could benefit from?
What type of management style do you work with best?
You're sure the instructions you've received from management are a mistake. How do you warn management of the your concerns and what do you do in the meantime?
Your supervisor has told you to drop everything and concentrate on something you think is unnecessary. Do you do it or try to get your more important work done, and deal with the matter afterwards?
You're getting distracted by extra work and meetings and it's generating a backlog of work for you. How do you cope with it?
What qualities do you feel a successful manager should have?
Do you prefer to work alone, or as part of a team?
How do you handle delegation issues with unlicensed assistive personnel?
How would your co-workers describe you?
How would you describe your skills as a team player?
Do you handle conflict well?
Have you ever had a conflict with a boss or professor? How did you resolve it?
How much money do you need to make to be happy?
What kind of salary are you looking for?
Why should I hire you?
What did you learn from our website?

Please Discuss:

A conflict you encountered and how you handled it
A time when you used good communication
A time when you were in a leadership position
A time when you disagreed with a rule or policy
A time you went above and beyond for a patient/customer
An incident of workplace conflict and how you addressed it
An error and how you addressed it
An example of collaboration in the workplace
Can you describe a situation in which you were supposed to work with a person you didn't like and how you handled it?
What should you do if you were asked to float to a specialty area you weren't familiar with?
A time your work was criticized and how you handled it?
A time you saw something unethical or not done correctly by another coworker/boss/doctor.
Tell me about a time or situation when you were under pressure.
Have you ever witnessed a breach of confidentiality & what you did.
Tell me about a time where you had to delegate care or take a leadership role.
Describe a difficult decision you've made and the process you went through to reach it.