

A Cover Letter That Fits

**Turn One Job Posting and One Real
Example into a Focused Application**

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Start with the work you need to finish

A specific cover-letter draft that connects the advertised work to one example you can substantiate.

This book is for adult applicants who have a real vacancy in front of them and keep rewriting a generic letter.

Bring: The vacancy, your résumé, one real work example and the application instructions.

The working method: Match the work in the posting to one piece of your own evidence; use that pairing to build an opening, a proof paragraph and a close.

Start with the four working sheets immediately after this introduction. They are part of the book, not an external download you must obtain. You can write on paper or copy the field labels into a document. The fictional worked example shows what a completed piece can look like; the reference sections explain choices and difficult cases. You do not have to finish the reference before making your first notes.

A useful first result is a filled brief: the real task, the available facts and the missing information. A blank field tells you what to find out. It is not permission to invent a detail. Completion takes your own checking and revision; this book does not promise a fixed time or control over someone else's response.

For adult job applicants. Examples are fictional. The book helps you write the application; it does not

promise an interview or an offer.

The named people and dialogue in the examples are fictional illustrations, not customer results. Their circumstances are not instructions to copy into your own situation. Treat strong rules of thumb as drafting defaults; the actual brief, recipient, privacy needs and applicable requirements take precedence.

Find the part you need

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Working sheet 1 — Posting-to-proof map

1. Role and employer exactly as advertised

Your notes: _____

2. One requirement quoted from the posting

Your notes: _____

3. What I personally did that relates to it

Your notes: _____

4. A detail I can verify; no invented metric

Your notes: _____

5. Why this particular role makes sense now

Your notes: _____

Decision before moving on: Which fact remains unverified, and what is the next action needed?

Working sheet 2 — Three-paragraph draft

1. Opening: this requirement and why I am applying here

Your notes: _____

2. Proof: the situation, my action and a true relevant detail

Your notes: _____

3. Close: the appropriate next step and requested availability

Your notes: _____

4. Sentence I can remove because it repeats my résumé

Your notes: _____

Decision before moving on: Which fact remains
unverified, and what is the next action needed?

Working sheet 3 — Situation check

1. My situation: career change / gap / referral / internal move / none

Your notes: _____

2. One relevant fact the reader needs

Your notes: _____

3. What I will leave out because it does not help assess this role

Your notes: _____

4. Any name or referral I have permission to use

Your notes: _____

Decision before moving on: Which fact remains unverified, and what is the next action needed?

Working sheet 4 — Application send check

1. Correct employer, role and contact throughout

Your notes: _____

2. Requested file type, channel and any length limit

Your notes: _____

3. Facts checked against résumé and records

Your notes: _____

4. Final file opened and read after export

Your notes: _____

5. Only the intended version attached; submission recorded

Your notes: _____

Decision before moving on: Which fact remains unverified, and what is the next action needed?

A fictional application, built from evidence

The invented vacancy asks for an office coordinator who can keep appointment records accurate and explain changes to customers. The invented applicant, Alex, has worked at a community repair desk. Alex has not managed a clinical office and should not imply otherwise.

The weak start is: “I am a passionate professional with excellent communication skills.” Nothing in that sentence identifies this job or demonstrates the claim.

The useful pairing is the advertised scheduling task and one thing Alex really did in this fictional scenario: maintained a shared repair calendar and contacted customers when parts were delayed.

Worked draft — fictional, not a template with a guaranteed result:

Dear Hiring Manager,

Your office coordinator vacancy combines appointment records with customer communication. At the repair desk where I currently work, I maintain the shared booking calendar and explain scheduling changes to customers; that combination is why I am applying for this role.

When a parts delivery was delayed last month, I checked the affected bookings with our technician, contacted the customers and recorded each agreed change in the shared calendar. The work taught me to confirm what had changed before promising a new

time. I would bring that same care to your appointment records while learning your office procedures.

My résumé gives the details of my current role. I would welcome a conversation about your scheduling and customer-contact work.

Alex Morgan

Why each part earns its place: the opening names the actual combination of duties. The middle supplies an action rather than another adjective. The close asks for one appropriate next step. No invented percentage, claimed qualification or copied company slogan is doing the work.

Your task is to replace the pairing and the evidence, not merely the name. If your experience does not support the advertised requirement, choose another relevant example or acknowledge what you still need to learn.

Guide 1 — The first line

Delete the first sentence

The apply sentence arrives because it is polite and because every sample starts there. *I am writing to apply for the position of Night Baker as advertised on your site.* The site knows. The button knows. The subject line knows if you wrote one. Line one has used its only chance to make them read line two, and it spent that chance on a fact they already have.

You can walk through that door if you must. Some rooms are formal and a plain apply line keeps you from looking like a stunt. Then line two still has to work. The apply sentence is not the craft. It is a greeting you outgrow as soon as you have something to say.

What you say is the posting, or the work, or the person who told you to write. *The contractor's posting is a messy inbox and a month that still has to close. I have closed months in inboxes that looked like that.* Now they have a reason to read the next sentence. The apply fact can sit in a header, a subject, or a short clause later. It does not have to eat the first line.

You read the deleted sentence aloud. *I am writing to apply.* It is true. It is also empty. Empty is how a tired person decides the rest will be empty. Fill the first line with a thing from this posting. Save true-and-empty for the recycling.

A second try still dies. *I am applying for the operations role.* The role is in the subject. The role is in the filename. The first line names the work or the

reason. The title can wait until the close, or sit in the header with the date.

Line two

The first paragraph has one job: they read the second. Not a hook. Not a biography. Not a joke they have to decode. A line a tired person can finish, with a reason to continue.

Line two can be the proof. Line one names the shift. Line two is the year you already did it. Line one names the backlog. Line two is the kind of backlog you closed. Line one names the person who sent you. Line two is the work, because a name is not enough.

If line two repeats line one with an adverb, you have not written a second line. *I am careful. I am extremely careful.* They will not read line three. Put a thing in line two. A form. A close. A month that actually closed. A tool the posting named.

You do not need a stunning line one. You need a readable line one. Stunning is how you write a stunt. *Imagine a world without friction.* They cannot cash that in a bookkeeping inbox. *I have closed months in inboxes that looked like yours.* They can cash that. They read line two.

The second paragraph is later. The three-paragraph shape has its own chapter. Tonight you only earn the second paragraph by not dying in the first sentence. That is a smaller job than you were sold. Small is the point. A first line that does too much is a hook. Hooks belong in a different industry. This is a letter.

The clinic line

Friday. A clinic posting. Third line: Mondays without a doctor on site. The list shows medical assistant, which is close and not the same. The open question is whether you have run a morning without a white coat in the building.

You write: *Your posting asks for someone who has already run a Monday clinic without a doctor on site. I have.*

Line two: the year, the size of the waiting room, the thing you did when the stack of charts was stupid. You do not write a television episode. You write enough that line three can be the close or the proof they need next.

You do not write: *My name is Jordan Hale and I am excited to apply for the Medical Assistant position at your esteemed clinic.* Esteemed is a word that dies. Excited is a word they cannot verify. Your name is in the header. The title is in the posting. You have used the first line on three facts they already own, plus a feeling. They do not read line two. They already know how this letter goes.

You print the clinic letter. You read only the first sentence, as they will if they are in a hurry. If that sentence could be lifted onto a warehouse letter, you have not written the clinic. You go back to Mondays. Mondays are the posting. Mondays are the first line.

The warehouse line

Saturday. Overtime in your head, even though you are at the table. A warehouse listing. They need a closer who does not leave a mess for the morning. Your list shows warehouse. So do forty other lists.

You write: *The warehouse listing says you need someone who can close a shift without leaving the next person a mess. That is the work I already do.*

Line two is one close you can stand behind. A pallet that would have been a morning problem. A count that matched. You do not invent a number to look like a board report. You do not write a dollar figure you cannot defend in a chair. If you do not have a number, you have a shift. The shift is enough for line one.

You almost write a hook. *What if I told you your mornings could be clean.* You delete it. You are not selling a show. You are asking a tired supervisor to read a second sentence. Supervisors do not read riddles at 9:12.

The filename is Lastname_Firstname_Closer.pdf for the list and Lastname_Firstname_Closer_Letter.pdf for this page. The first line inside the letter still has to work. A good filename does not rescue a stunt.

Guide 2 — Do not repeat the résumé

The question the list cannot hold

A résumé is a list because that is its job. Dates. Titles. Tools. A city. It cannot hold a reason without becoming a speech. Speeches belong in a letter, and even then only one.

You look at the posting until one line of it is louder than the rest. *Cover letter required* is not that line. *Competitive salary* is not that line. The loud line is the work. Friday close with one person in the building. A clinic that just opened a second site. A desk that has to run in two languages before noon. A shop that lost the person who knew the till.

You write toward that line. One night you have actually had. One night the bullets flatten. The bullet said: closed shops, cash, keys. The night was: the alarm already set, the till still open, you stayed. That night is the letter. The keys can stay on the résumé.

If you cannot find a loud line, you are applying to a posting that has not given you a job for the letter. You can still send. You send a short reason for this door, and one proof. You do not invent a loud line you did not read.

You try, on a bad night, to be complete. Completeness is how the clone is born. You think: they might miss the second job on page one. You put the second job in the letter. Then the third. Then the skills. The letter is now page one with indent. Completeness is a second

résumé. The letter's job is a remainder.

The remainder is small. Why this posting. Why this work now. Why a step that looks sideways. Why a junior title when the years look senior. Why a city. Why a team whose name you only have from the posting. One of those. Not all of them. All of them is an essay. The essay is the next chapter's failure. Tonight the failure is the clone.

You write the remainder in one sentence and you stop copying.

Print both

You print them on a Sunday because the screen lies.

The résumé is one page or two. The letter is one page. You hold them up to the light. Same verbs. Same tools. Same city. You fold the letter. It is still page one. You take a pencil and you strike every sentence that exists on the other sheet. What is left, if anything, is the draft. If nothing is left, you have been decorating. Decorating is not a remainder.

What often survives the pencil: a sentence about this posting. A night the bullets flattened. A reason for a step that looks wrong on paper. A name someone said you could use. What dies under the pencil: we, team player, excellent communication, the employment history in full, the skills block in commas, a paragraph per job, a claim that you are passionate about a company whose posting you opened at midnight.

You write the surviving sentences into a clean file. You give the file a name that is not Letter.docx.

Lastname_Firstname_Role_letter.pdf is enough. The

résumé keeps its own name. Two objects. Two jobs.

A person at the table says, *It looks short.*

You say, *The long one was the résumé again. Short is the remainder.*

They want volume. Volume is how applicants soothe themselves. The hiring person is not soothed by volume. They are holding two files. They would like the second file to do a second job.

The posting, out loud

You read the posting to the room as if it were a person.

We need someone who can keep the Friday close without a second person in the building.

You say back, *I have closed on a Friday with the alarm set and the till open, and I stayed.*

That exchange is the letter. You type it. You do not then add January through March of the last job. January through March is on the left.

Another posting: *Second site. Same records. No extra body for six months.*

You say back, *I ran records for two rooms with one login and one afternoon.*

That is the remainder. The résumé will still show the employer, the dates, the title. The letter shows the two rooms.

Another posting: *Bilingual desk before noon.*

You say back, *The morning line at my last desk was two languages before the coffee urn was full.*

You do not write a list of languages. The languages are on the résumé. You write the urn, or you write nothing extra, only the morning line. One image is enough. A catalogue of images is a second list.

If you cannot say anything back that is true, you are in the wrong posting or you have not yet looked at your own nights. Sit with the nights. Do not invent a Friday you did not close. Invented Fridays die in a room with a person who closes Fridays.

Guide 3 — Three paragraphs

Why this posting

The first of the three is the reason for this tab.

Not a reason for work in general. Not a reason for the industry as a cloud. This posting. This door. This loud line. You look at the tab until you can say, in one or two sentences, why you are in this pile and not the pile you did not open.

Bad nights produce: I have always wanted to work for a company that values excellence. That sentence fits every door in the park. Generic is flagged in small shops. Generic is skipped in big ones. You replace it with a fact of the posting. The second site. The Friday close. The bilingual noon. The records login. The clinic's new hours. The shop that lost the person who knew the till. You put that fact next to a fact of yours. That pairing is paragraph one.

You do not need a childhood to make the pairing. You do not need a manifesto. You need two facts that belong together. Then you stop the first paragraph. Stopping is part of the craft. A first paragraph that runs to the middle of page two has failed its only job. It has not earned the second. It has become the second, and the third, and a fourth nobody asked for.

Ren, still craft, writes paragraph one as a block that includes the whole employment history. Ren thinks the history is the reason. The history is the résumé. You take Ren's block and you cut it at the pairing. The

history goes back to the PDF. The pairing stays.

Mara's first paragraph is the pairing plus the career change in one clause. Why this work now. The old field stays on the résumé. If Mara uses the whole first page to narrate the old field, the posting never arrives. The posting has to arrive in paragraph one or it arrives never.

Kit's first paragraph can hold the name. The name is a fact of this pile. Then the pairing. Then stop. The name is not a licence to write five pages. The name got them a reader for paragraph two. Paragraph two still has to work.

One proof

The second of the three is one proof.

Not three jobs restated. Not a tour of 2019, 2021, and 2024. One night, maybe two if they are short and they serve the same loud line. A number if you have a number that is true. You do not invent a figure to look like a person who invents figures. You do not write a fake fortune. You write a night you could answer for in a room.

The proof is not a summary of the résumé. Guide 2 already spent you on that cut. The proof is the remainder in the shape of a scene. I closed. I stayed. I ran two rooms on one login. I held the morning line in two languages before the urn was full. I taught a till to a person on their first Friday and the till was right. That is paragraph two. Then you stop.

You will want to add the other nights. The other nights are how paragraph two becomes page two. Page two is

how they stop. Keep the other nights in a file you do not send. If they interview you, they can have another night. This book does not interview you. This chapter gives them one proof so they finish the letter.

A person at the table says, *But you did more than that.*

You say, *The résumé says I did more than that. The letter has one proof because they will finish one proof.*

If the proof is a clone of a bullet, you have not yet found the night. Sit until the bullet opens. The bullet is flat on purpose. The letter is allowed one curve. One. A letter of curves is a short story. Short stories belong in another spine.

Overqualified nights belong in their chapter. Tonight, if the years are the problem, the proof is not a longer list of years. The proof is a night at the height of the posting. Junior work, done, with care, recently. The close can hold the reason for the height. The proof holds the work.

The close

The third of the three is the close.

One next step. Thank you if you need the manners. Availability in one clause if they asked. You do not write salary negotiable when nobody asked about salary. You do not pile references, a portfolio, a second PDF, a link tree, a philosophy, a hope, an eagerness, a passion, and a paragraph about Monday. Monday is a send in a later chapter. It is not a personality. It is not a close.

You type: I would welcome a conversation about the Friday close. Then you stop. Or: I can be at the shop on a weekday morning if you want the letter in a mouth. Then you stop. Or: Thank you for reading. I am in your city from June. Then you stop.

Weak closes beg. Begging is a fourth paragraph pretending to be a third. *I hope to hear from you. I am the ideal candidate. I will follow up on Tuesday, and Thursday, and again.* One follow-up is a later night if the posting asked for nothing else. The letter itself holds one next step and then it ends. Ending is a skill. Five-page essays do not know how to end. They fade. Fading is how a reader leaves.

You sign with the name they already have. You put a phone and an email if the letter is a separate file. You do not add a new biography under the signature. The signature is a close, not a door back into page one.

Length they will finish

Finish is the test. Not beauty. Not completeness. Finish.

You hand the letter to a person who does not love you. You watch their face. If they turn the page, you have written too much unless they asked for a second page. If they stop in the first block, the first block has not done its job. If they finish three blocks and look up, you have a letter.

You do this in a café with one outlet. You do this again on a Sunday with the PDF on the left. You do not ask, *Is it good.* You ask, *Did you finish it.* Good is a fog. Finish is a fact.

A five-page essay can be good in a drawer. In a pile it is a wall. You are writing for a pile. The pile is unromantic. The pile is the room.

If you are proud of a fourth paragraph, put it in the notes for an interview you do not have yet. Pride is allowed in a drawer. Pride is not a reason to send a wall.

You will be told that a letter should be one page. One page of small type can still be a wall. Three short blocks on one page is the length. White space is part of the length. White space is how the eye agrees to go on. Fill the page to the footer and you have written a second résumé in a nicer font.

Guide 4 — A name or Hiring Manager

No name on the posting

Tuesday. Apply button. Required letter. No *ask for* a person. You type *Dear Hiring Manager*, and you feel the small shame the internet taught you to feel. The shame is a blog comment from a year you do not remember, telling you that Hiring Manager is lazy. Lazy is sending a clone. Lazy is a five-page essay. Hiring Manager, when you have no name, is accurate. The person who hires is the person you are writing to. You do not know their given name. You say so by using their job. Then you write paragraph one.

You send it. The letter is the rest of the page. The salutation did not impress anyone. It did not offend anyone. It let the first paragraph start. That is the job of *Dear*.

A person in the doorway says, *You have to find a name. They love that.*

You say, *If they published a name I will use it. I am not inventing a person to impress a person.*

They look unconvinced. You go back to the remainder. The remainder is why this posting, one proof, a close. The handle was enough.

The name they published

The posting says: send the letter to Maya Okonkwo, Shop Manager. You write *Dear Ms. Okonkwo*, or *Dear Maya Okonkwo*, or *Dear Maya*, if the posting signed Maya and the shop is a first-name room. You spell Okonkwo twice. You check the posting again. You do not guess a hyphen. You do not add a title they did not use if you are unsure. You use the name they paid to put on the internet.

A small-shop door. The name is on the window. You use it. *Dear Mr. Alvarez*. You do not write *Dear Hiring Manager* to a person whose name is on the glass. That is a different kind of lazy. The glass was the publication.

An email from a recruiter: *I am Jordan. I am running this search*. You write *Dear Jordan*. Jordan is the door they named. You do not hunt Jordan's boss to look thorough. Thorough, here, is rude.

A committee listed as Search Committee, no names. *Dear Members of the Search Committee*. That line has a room. Academic piles. Some nonprofit piles. Some public jobs. You do not invent a chair. You do not write to the one name you found on a faculty page and hope the other four enjoy being ignored.

You say, if someone asks, *I used the name they printed*.

They say, *What if you can find a better name*.

A better name is a name they gave me. The other kind is a guess.

Committee

A committee exists.

You will write as if one person will hire you because that is how the fantasy of the letter works. The fantasy is useful for the remainder. It is not always true of the pile. Three people will open the file. Or a recruiter and a manager. Or a board. The salutation that names one guessed person leaves the other two outside. *Dear Hiring Committee* keeps them in. *Dear Hiring Manager* is still fine when you do not know whether a committee is in the room. Many rooms are one tired manager and a folder. You are not punished for Hiring Manager in those rooms. You are punished for a wrong first name.

You do not write *Dear Team* as a joke. You do not write *Dear Future Colleagues* as a hope. Hope is not a salutation. You do not write *To the Trapped Reader of This Pile*. You are ceremonial-dry, not a clown. The handle is ordinary on purpose.

If the posting says *applications reviewed by a panel*, you can say Committee. If it says nothing, Hiring Manager holds.

Guide 5 — They asked for one

The posting is the brief

Some postings do not only ask for a letter. They tell you what to put in it.

In your cover letter, please tell us about a time you handled a complaint, and which of our sites you can reach by public transport.

That is the brief. The letter answers those two things, then one proof if there is room, then a close. You do not send your master file and hope they hunt.

You write:

I can reach the Mill Street site on the 14 bus. Last winter a regular at Hale's waited twenty minutes for a loaf we had burned. I replaced it, I told her the truth about the oven, and she came back the next day. I can do that work on Mill Street.

They asked. You answered. The rest of your life is not required.

If the posting lists essential criteria and says *please address these in your letter*, you address them in prose. You do not paste a table of yes/yes/yes unless they asked for a table. You name the criterion as work you have done. If you have not done one of them, you say so in one clause and you say what you have done that sits next to it. Lying in a required letter is a later disaster with your mouth in a room. This book will not help you lie.

If the posting asks for a letter of two pages, you do not send four. If it asks for one page, you do not send two. If it says brief, you are brief. The posting is the length.

If the posting says nothing about length and only says required, you finish in a page they will finish. Five pages for a required letter is how you are out after they asked you in.

A letter that could only be this posting

You sit with the posting open. You copy nothing from it except the name of the role and the name of the shop, which you type with your own hands so you feel the spelling.

You look for the open question. The résumé says you have done shops, or clinics, or a desk. The posting is this shop, this clinic, this desk, these hours, this town, this tool, this sentence about the work that is not a generic skill.

You write a first line that contains one of those.

Your posting is for a Saturday closer who has already run a till after eight with a queue and a broken card machine. I did that at Hale's.

They read the second line because the first line could not be for a bank.

Second paragraph: one proof with a noun they can see. The card machine. The queue. The Saturday. A number if you have a number you can stand behind. You do not invent a number.

Third paragraph: you can start on the date they named, or you name the date you can start. You thank them for the time it takes to open a file. You stop.

That is a required letter that does the job they asked the letter to do. It does not hire you. It puts you in the pile of people who read the posting.

You read it once more. You search for the old shop's name. You search for *your company*. You search for *opportunity* and you keep it only if the sentence still has a noun from this posting. You search for *passionate* and you cut it. You search for brackets. You export. You attach. You send when sending is the chapter. Tonight you have a file in the required slot.

A council posting asks for a letter and names a grant. You name the grant you actually closed, with the year. A warehouse posting asks for a letter and names nights. You name nights you have worked. A museum posting asks for a letter and names a public desk on Sundays. You name a public desk. The pattern is the same object. The nouns change. The master file cannot guess the nouns.

Guide 6 — They did not ask

Optional

The upload says *Cover letter (optional)*. Grey text. No asterisk.

You have a choice that is a real choice. You do not pretend optional means required, and you do not pretend optional means a trap. You look at what you would say.

If the résumé already answers this posting — same role, same tools, same hours, no gap that needs a sentence — you may skip. Skipping is allowed in this room. The tab may never open. You spend the hour on a posting that asked.

If the résumé leaves a question standing, you write. Why this junior role. Why this trade now. Why this town. Why the gap is a gap and the work is still here. Those sentences do not belong as bullets. They belong in a letter. Optional is the place they gave you. You take it because you have something to put there, not because a slogan told you to take every box.

Mara's nights gather here when the posting is silent and the résumé looks like a different life. Craft. Optional is how she says why this work now without lying on the PDF of years. If she skips, they will guess. Guesses are rarely kind.

A generic letter in an optional box is worse than an empty optional box. Empty is a skip. Generic is a person who opened a tab and found last Tuesday. If you cannot write a letter that dies when the shop's

name is swapped, leave the box empty.

You write, when you write:

Your posting is optional on the letter. I'm attaching one because the résumé looks like shops and this role is a desk that still has a queue. I ran that queue at Hale's. I want the desk.

They may not open it. If they open it, they have a reason. That is the whole of optional as craft.

They said do not send one

Some postings are plain. *Please do not send a cover letter. We do not read them.*

You do not send one. You do not send one as a PDF named ReadMe.pdf. You do not paste it into the equalities box. You do not put it on page two of the résumé. They told you the object they do not want. You keep the object.

A firm writes, *To make applying easier, we don't ask for a cover letter.* That sentence is a gift of time. You take the time. You make the résumé stand. You submit.

A government form says *do not attach additional documents unless requested.* You do not attach additional documents. Your letter is an additional document.

Obeying a negative ask is the same craft as obeying a required ask. The posting is the brief. You are not more serious than the brief.

You will feel the itch to show them who you are. Who you are, in this night, is a person who can follow a

sentence. That is already information.

They ask later

You skipped because there was no box. Wednesday an email: *The panel meets Thursday. Can you send a short letter by noon.*

They did not ask on the posting. They are asking now. The door is a person with a noon. You send the letter by eleven. You do not send the master file with a hole. You write to this panel, this role, the proof you would have written on Monday if Monday had asked.

If you cannot make noon, you say so before noon. *I can send it by three. If that's too late, I understand.* You do not send silence and a file at 16:10. Silence until 16:10 is a missing letter with a stamp.

A cousin: they ask later and you have already written the letter and not sent it, because the box was gone. You have the file on the desk. You send it. This is why the file lives on the desk even on skip nights. Skip is for the form. The desk can still hold a page.

Guide 7 — The ATS box

Two uploads

You attach the résumé to both fields because you are tired and the second field looks hungry. Submit. In the record, the letter tab opens to page one of your work history. The person who clicks it closes it. They already have this.

You merge the letter and the résumé into one PDF because a blog told you parsers like one file. You upload that one file as the résumé. You leave the letter box empty, or you upload the same PDF again. The résumé tab now begins with *Dear Hiring Manager*. The parser that expected dates and jobs has a greeting. The letter tab is empty or is a duplicate. You have made both objects worse.

You put the letter in the résumé box and the résumé in the letter box. The first click is now your prose. The years are in the tab nobody opens on a first pass. You are out without anyone disliking you.

The night that works is dull. Résumé field: the résumé. Letter field: the letter. File names that a human can read in a zip of two hundred.
Lastname_Firstname_Role.pdf and
Lastname_Firstname_Role_Letter.pdf. You submit.
You do not then email a third copy.

If the form accepts only one file, you are in Guide 6's vanished box. You do not invent a second file. If the form accepts many files and labels none of them, you put the résumé first and the letter second if a second is

honest. You do not upload certificates, a photo, a portfolio, and a letter in a pile unless they asked for a pile.

The counter in the corner

Some boxes are not uploads. They are fields. A cursor. A number in the corner that ticks down. 4,000 characters. 2,000. 500. You paste your one-page letter and the last third vanishes. The close is gone. The proof is cut in half. You submit a stump.

You write in the field. You watch the number. You keep the first line and one proof and a close that fits. You cut the sentence about the bus. You cut the second proof. You keep the shop's name and the role.

Five hundred characters is a postcard. You can still say a thing.

Scheduler role. I ran the late list at Eastside last winter and I can do Thursdays until eight. I can start the sixth. Résumé is in the other upload.

That is a letter the counter will hold. A cut-off paragraph that ends in the middle of a boast is not.

If the field says *plain text*, you paste plain text. You do not paste a table. You do not paste a header with your address in twenty-point type. You do not paste smart quotes that become diamonds. You look at the preview if there is a preview. You read the stump if there is no preview.

If the field says *PDF only*, you send a PDF. If it says *no .pages*, you do not send .pages. If it rejects a file over two megabytes, you do not send a scan of a letter you

photographed in yellow kitchen light. You export. You keep the file small.

The box is an object with rules. The rules are on the screen. You follow them the way you follow *required*.

Keywords

The posting is a pile of nouns. Inventory. Cycle counts. Forklift. Receiving. Stakeholder. Excel. Grant reporting. Public desk. You can hear the advice from a corridor: put the nouns in. Put them all in. Put them in twice.

You paste the posting into the letter and you change the pronouns. *I have experience with inventory, cycle counts, forklift, warehouse management, and receiving. I am proficient in inventory and receiving and I enjoy cycle counts.* A person opens the tab on Thursday and closes it. They can hear a pile. They asked, in the other box, for a letter.

Stuffing is a list that could be anyone's. A letter is a night of work with one of those nouns inside it.

I ran cycle counts on the night shift at Dock 4 for fourteen months. The forklift licence is current. Receiving is the work I want more of, which is why this posting.

The résumé already has the licence and the months. The letter uses the posting's nouns inside a sentence you can say with your mouth. Once. Maybe twice if the proof needs the word again. Not in a drumbeat.

Some records search the résumé for nouns and do not search the letter until a person opens it. Then stuffing

the letter does nothing for the first pass. You put the true nouns in the résumé where the work actually sat. You keep the letter as a letter.

Some fields index whatever you paste. Then the nouns in the letter are searchable. They are still sentences. A searchable pile is still a pile when a person arrives.

You will be offered a product that claims to score the match. You will see a number that pretends to be a door. This book will not invent a number for you and it will not sell you a login. If a form in front of you shows you a completeness bar, you complete the required fields. Completeness is not a grade of your soul. It is a bar.

You do not hide nouns in white text. You do not put a list of synonyms after the close in a tiny font. A person will see it or a later tool will show it. Either way you look like someone who thought the box was a trick. The box is a box.

Guide 8 — Career change

Card — The career-change letter

Works	Dies
<i>I ran a sixty-seat room for six years — vendors, labor, inventory, a second site on time. Your operations coordinator posting is that work at a dock.</i>	<i>Although my background is in hospitality, I am excited to transition into operations.</i>
<i>The group sold in March. I want daylight operations in food. I am done with Saturday close.</i>	<i>I have always wanted to work for a company like yours.</i>
<i>When we opened the second site I built the inventory, the vendor list, and six weeks of labor. The counts were real.</i>	<i>I am a fast learner with a unique, transferable skill set.</i>
<i>I picked nights for three years and covered the dispatch radio for forty-two shifts. Your dispatch seat is that radio as the job.</i>	<i>Operations Manager, 2019–2024 on years a W-2 will still call Shift Supervisor.</i>
<i>I built the unit for five sections and revised it each term from what the room did. I want the build without the bell schedule.</i>	<i>I am passionate about helping people learn and grow.</i>
<i>I can start the first Monday in June. The résumé is attached. I am glad to walk the warehouse.</i>	<i>I would be an asset to your team in any capacity.</i>

Guide 9 — Overqualified

Card — The junior role

Works	Dies
<i>I want the coordinator seat because I want to write the work again. My last title was director. I am aligned with the posted range.</i>	<i>I can do anything you need.</i>
<i>I want the bench, not the office. I asked for this seat.</i>	<i>No job is too small for me.</i>
<i>I am done with the travel load. This role is in this city, on these hours, on this product.</i>	<i>I would be an asset at any level.</i>
<i>The monthly note is the work I am good at. I want a seat where that note is the job.</i>	A first paragraph that only lists headcount, budgets, and progressive leadership.
<i>I am not looking for a director title this year.</i>	<i>I am overqualified and willing to take a step back.</i>
<i>I can start on the sixth. I am glad to send the writing sample you asked for.</i>	<i>I would be so grateful for any opportunity to add value.</i>

Guide 10 — The gap

Card — The gap sentence

Works	Dies
<i>I was out from April 2022 to June 2023 for a health matter. It is resolved. I am available full-time.</i>	Three paragraphs of diagnosis, journey, and renewed energy.
<i>I was the primary caregiver for a parent from March 2021 to January 2023. I am back to full-time work.</i>	<i>Independent Consultant, 2021–2023</i> with no clients.
<i>A death in the family took me out of work in March 2022. I am applying for this desk now.</i>	A eulogy in the middle of a coordinator letter.
Four quiet months after a job ended: no sentence in the letter.	Sliding 2019 until it touches 2023 so the white space disappears.
<i>I have been out since April. I am available for this full-time seat starting the sixth.</i>	<i>This journey taught me resilience and I am stronger than ever.</i>
ATS box: the same one sentence, then upload.	A machine paragraph about wellness, gratitude, and what really matters.

Guide 11 — Someone named you

Card — The name in line one

Works	Dies
<i>Dana Alvarez suggested I write to you about the night coordinator posting.</i>	<i>I know everyone, including possibly Dana.</i>
<i>Dana Alvarez, who closed North Yard with me, suggested I apply. She said I may use her name.</i>	<i>A mutual connection thought I should reach out.</i>
<i>After the name: I closed the Friday count for three years.</i>	<i>After the name: I have always been passionate about operations.</i>
<i>May I use your name in a letter for this posting?</i>	<i>I'll cc you so they see we know each other.</i>
<i>We closed the same yard. I do not report to her.</i>	<i>Dana, who is basically family, will vouch for my whole life.</i>
<i>I am copying the spelling she sent me.</i>	<i>I think it's Dana with a Y. They'll know who I mean.</i>
<i>Rohan said I may name that we worked the same list. The close is the work I am offering.</i>	<i>As Suresh said at the conference when we sort of met, I'm a rising star.</i>
<i>You asked me to apply. Here is the close I already run.</i>	<i>As you know, you named me, so I won't take much of your time.</i>

Guide 12 — After a layoff

Card — The fact, then the work

Works	Dies
<i>The product line closed in March. I am applying because this posting is the weekly close I already know.</i>	<i>After a painful chapter, I am seeking a company that values people.</i>
<i>The role ended in a layoff. Here is the vendor list I ran that matches your window.</i>	<i>Leadership failed us, and I am ready to be respected.</i>
<i>I left in the March reduction. I want this seat for the catalogue work.</i>	<i>Unfortunately I was let go, which taught me so much about myself.</i>
<i>One clause on the ending. Then the posting.</i>	<i>Three paragraphs on the last day, the box of plants, the speech in the cafeteria.</i>
<i>The shop I sat in is in the news. I will not relitigate the news.</i>	<i>As you have probably read...</i>
<i>Dates on the résumé stay. I have not been consulting.</i>	<i>I have been quietly consulting while I figure out my path.</i>
<i>I want this smaller seat because it is still a list, a week, a cold room.</i>	<i>I can do anything. I will not be bored. I am grateful and flexible on money.</i>
<i>The line closed. I ran vendors. I want to run yours.</i>	<i>I am on a journey to find a workplace that feels like family.</i>

Guide 13 — Internal

Card — The internal letter

Works	Dies
<i>Posting 4481, morning dispatch lead. I covered that desk eight Tuesdays this quarter.</i>	<i>You already know me, so I'll keep this informal!</i>
<i>I want this seat because it owns the queue I have already closed.</i>	<i>Lunch has made it clear that Pat is the problem.</i>
<i>I have told my manager I am applying, as the posting asked.</i>	<i>Please don't tell Sam yet; I wanted you to hear it first as a friend.</i>
<i>The proof is ticket 22011, which is still in the system.</i>	<i>Everyone says I deserve this.</i>
<i>Three sentences. Posting, proof, close.</i>	<i>Empty box, because they know me.</i>
<i>I am applying from the second floor to the dock office. Here is the work that travels.</i>	<i>We have the same birthday cake vendor, so I already feel part of the team.</i>
<i>My rotation ends in June. I want to keep doing this hour on the board I already close.</i>	<i>As I'm sure you know, the current team is a disaster and I need an exit.</i>
<i>I have run this board as a contractor. I want the seat on the books.</i>	<i>Make me real. I already act like staff. You know I do.</i>

Guide 14 — The email is the letter

Card — The email

Works	Dies
Coordinator — Alderwick, Tessa	Job
Letter in the body, one résumé PDF	Please find attached my application materials
AlderwickTessaCoordinator.pdf	resume.pdf
Name, phone, city under the close	A quote about passion and three logos
Dear Hiring Manager, or Dear Dee	Dear Sirs, or a name you guessed from a social page
The files they named	Six files you hoped would look thorough
First line they can read on a phone	I hope this email finds you well
Résumé attached. (after the letter)	See attached. (instead of the letter)

Guide 15 — The close

Card — The close

Works	Dies
I can be at the studio Thursday after two.	I look forward to hearing from you at your earliest convenience.
I am available for a twenty-minute call this week.	I will call you Thursday at 9:00 unless I hear from you.
(no money line; they did not ask)	Salary negotiable.
Thank you.	I am very interested and would love the opportunity and I work well with others and I am free nights and weekends.
Résumé attached.	Encl: résumé, references, writing sample, portfolio, headshot
Sincerely, / Thank you,	Respectfully submitted, / Warmly, / Cheers,
One reason for the junior desk, then a start date	I promise I will not be bored and I will stay and I will take the pay
The name in the first line; a window in the close	Priya said you would love to meet me. P.S. I am passionate about your mission.

Guide 16 — The machine wrote it

What they hear

They hear a smoothness that has no floor.

A person who has done the work names a floor, a tool, a season, a close, a number they can defend. The machine names *cross-functional collaboration* and a *fast-paced environment* because those phrases were in a thousand postings and a thousand résumés. The ear that opens letters for a living has already met those phrases before breakfast.

They hear a first paragraph that explains the posting back to the person who wrote the posting. *After reviewing your job description* is a throat-clearing that says you can read. They know you can read. They posted the description.

They hear a second paragraph that is the résumé with *passionate* laid over the dates. They already have the résumé. If they opened the letter, they opened it for the question the listing left open. The machine does not know the question. The machine knows the posting and the bullets.

They hear a close that could be dropped onto any file in the pile. *I look forward to the opportunity to discuss how my skills align with your needs.* That sentence has no next step that belongs to this door. It is a courtesy that has been worn smooth.

They hear, sometimes, a fact you did not live. The panel will invent a year if your résumé is messy. It will invent a tool. It will invent a team size. It will invent *led a staff of twelve* because *twelve* sounds like a sentence. You will not notice at twenty to twelve. They will notice at nine, because they have the résumé in the other tab and the years do not match.

That is the miss this chapter is for. The paste is not a shortcut. The paste is a letter that already failed in a public column on four files.

Mara's table, a year that did not happen

Mara is craft. A composite. A career change on a Tuesday. Not proof.

Her résumé has eight years in accounts. The posting is a coordinator seat in a small clinic's front office. She has sat at a front desk covering lunch. The listing cannot see that lunch. That is why she is writing a letter.

She feeds the panel the posting and the résumé. The panel writes: *In 2019 I transitioned into patient-facing operations, where I honed my ability to deliver compassionate, high-quality experiences in a clinical setting.*

She did not transition in 2019. She covered a lunch desk in 2022 for six weeks while a colleague had a baby. The panel made a career out of a cover. The clause is smooth. The year is a lie the machine told because *transitioned* wanted a date.

Mara almost sends it. The letter is already three paragraphs. The filename is already serious. She reads the résumé again. 2019 is a year of invoices. The clinic is not in it.

She: You cannot put 2019 in the letter. I was in accounts.

You, if you are the friend at the table: Then the letter says the lunch cover. The year stays where it was.

She closes the panel. She writes the first line herself.

I covered the clinic front desk for six weeks in 2022 while we were short, and I want that work as the job, not the cover.

The second paragraph can still use a clause from the draft if the clause is true: she can answer a phone, she can keep a waiting room from stacking, she can close a till. She checks each clause against a Tuesday she actually stood in. If she cannot point to the Tuesday, the clause dies.

The machine is a pile of clauses. The letter starts when she types the first line with the pile closed.

She does not owe the panel a citation. She does not owe the hiring person a confession that a draft existed. She owes a first line that did not invent a year.

Guide 17 — Send

One name

They download what you gave them. They save it into a pile with other people's files. The pile is a list of names.

Letter.docx becomes, on their machine, a fight with every other Letter.docx of the week. scan0003.pdf looks like a phone picture of a form.

resume_and_letter.pdf hides two jobs in one object and makes the ATS split them badly.

Letter_final_FINAL_v3.pdf tells them you argued with yourself and left the argument in the filename.

Your last name. Your first name. The role as they named it, or a short version that still matches the posting. PDF. That is the name.

If your name is long, you still start with it. If the role is long, you shorten the role, not your name. If you are sending on paper, the filename still exists on the USB or in the email you sent as backup. The paper has your name at the top of the letter in the ordinary place. You do not invent a header that looks like a billboard.

You open the PDF once after you export it. You check that the first line is yours. You check that the page did not break in the middle of a proof. You check that the résumé PDF is the résumé you meant, not last March. Then you stop opening it.

Opening it again is how v4 is born.

If two postings share a duty, you still export two PDFs with two role names. Copying a file and changing three

words in the close is how the wrong city survives. Write the first line again for the new door. Keep a proof that is still true. Name the new file for the new role. Put only that file in send when that button is the button.

two tabs, one person

You have the posting open in one browser. You have a second tab with a second account because the first login failed. You fill both forms in a kind of panic. You are about to press Submit twice.

Two submissions are two versions in their pile, even if the files match. Two first lines, if you edited between tabs, are a small mess. One person. One send.

You close the broken login. You finish the tab that still has your files. You submit once. You wait for the thank-you screen. You do not *also* email the same letter to a general address *just in case* unless the posting named that address as a second door. Two doors they named: fine. Two doors you invented: a pile they did not ask to sort.

You: *Did it go.*

The screen: a confirmation number.

You write the number in the log. You close both tabs. You leave the second account alone.

