A cover letter, also called a letter of application, introduces you to the employer by providing a first impression of who you are, your experiences and qualifications. It highlights pertinent information that is relevant to the position for which you are applying. It is a formal document where you can demonstrate your skills, go into detail about specific topics in your résumé, and explain how you can fit and assist the organization.

CONTENT
There are many types of jobs, positions, and activities in the music field for which you could apply. This handbook focuses on three types of opportunities – music performance, music teaching, and arts administration. Before you begin writing, carefully read the job announcement to fully understand the expectations. Consider how to address the various responsibilities of the position and find ways to apply or mirror any keywords used in the job listing/description.

In general, cover letters inform the employer why you are suited for a position. Cover letters do not explain everything from your résumé. Instead, they serve as a sales pitch, bringing forth and highlighting related information you want them to notice. To understand what might be important to the position, do a little research on the organization and see if you can incorporate specific references to their projects.

Performance:
For most performance positions, only a résumé is required. If this is the case, just a formal email, to which a PDF is attached, will suffice. Make sure to highlight which position you are applying to (often multiple auditions are being held around the same time). Having a nice personalized email signature at the bottom is a good touch.
Teaching:
Use the cover letter to go into depth about certain teaching experiences that are applicable to the position. What topics or lesson plans have you focused on in your teaching? Are you familiar with the books and materials the school uses? What types of pedagogical methods do you specialize in (Suzuki, Kodaly, Jump Right In)? You should incorporate pedagogical terminology, assessment techniques, proof of student improvement or other creative endeavors.

If you are applying to a collegiate teaching position, make sure to assess what type of professor the search committee is looking for. Some schools prefer hiring scholars who are widely published or researched, while others focus on high-level performers. Once you know the requirements of the position, bring those to the forefront.

Note: When applying to a university or college, make sure to consider your experience in recruiting. Oftentimes, this is a requirement of your position as a professor and any experience (and success) in this field is coveted.

Arts Administration:
Most arts administration jobs are closely intertwined with business-type positions. When highlighting your related experience, make sure to point out your ability to communicate, lead, organize, collaborate, and/or other related skills. Avoid generic phrases such as have “good communication skills” or “work well in team.” Instead, illustrate your use of these through detailing projects you developed, worked on, completed and/or assisted.

FORMAT & LENGTH
Most cover letters should be 1 page in length, but for some higher education/leadership positions 1.5 pages may be appropriate. It is standard to use block form, which includes the recipient’s address above the salutation and spaces between paragraphs with no indentation, as shown below:

Chair Name
Institution or Organization
Street Address
City, State ZIP
Dear Ms., Mr., or Dr. (Name indicated on job description).
When addressing the letter, do not use “To Whom it May Concern” or “To the Search Committee.” Instead include the name of the person to whom you are sending your application.

**STYLIZING**

First and foremost, match the style of the cover letter to your résumé. Choose the same easy to read font and size. Incorporate the same letterhead at the top of your letter, which should include your name and contact information, such as address, phone number, and/or email. A little stylizing can be incorporated here, such as lines, color, or a graphic, but it should be relatively subtle.

Most applications are now submitted online. However, if you do send a printed copy, make sure it is on the same high-quality paper as your résumé (in a subtle color) and printed using a good machine (no smudges or smears).

**WORDING**

*Tone:*

Your audience will likely include a chair of the department and/or senior faculty members, so keep your prose professional and natural. Do not embellish your words or make them flowery because you think it’s what they want. Be direct, honest, and appropriately represent yourself.

The cover letter should compel the reader to take a closer look at your résumé or CV by highlighting your best and most relevant experiences or accomplishments. In the first two paragraphs, express your selected experiences in a positive and detailed manner. In the final paragraph it is important to highlight why you are interested in them and how you are the right fit. Remember it’s a two-way street and you need to demonstrate why this match would work. Overall, keep your tone respectful and honest - thank the committee at the end and show that you are willing to offer additional information or materials upon request.

*Transitions and Structure:*

Avoid simply rehashing your résumé or CV in prose form. Vary your sentence structure and avoid starting each sentence with “I.” Instead, use action verbs to
show your abilities and level of responsibility—these translate to skills, confidence, and knowledge. Make sure your verb tenses match your resume.

Avoid employing generic phrases such as “I work hard” or “I’m excited for this opportunity.” Instead, use your experiences as evidence to demonstrate your readiness for the role. What are the transferable skills or ideas? Connect the dots for your readers so that they understand how your previous experiences relate to the open position. This can be done quite effectively in transitions at the beginning or end of a paragraph. Check each paragraph to ensure that there is a clear flow between ideas and try not to repeat yourself.

Below are some sample action verbs to potentially incorporate into your résumé or CV to vary the terminology.

### Sample Action Verbs
(many of these verbs are applicable to multiple areas)

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>General</th>
<th>Musician</th>
<th>Teacher</th>
<th>Arts Administrator</th>
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Eastman School of Music
26 Gibbs Street
Rochester, NY 14604
Iml.esm.rochester.edu/careers/
TIPS:
Remember, writing a solid cover letter will take time, but it’s the first item an employer will read from your application. Make it compelling enough that they continue to read about you! Plan ahead to ensure the best product is produced and remember these tips when preparing/whiling writing:

✓ Review other cover letters for reference and ideas.
✓ Incorporate words and concepts from the application.
✓ Present yourself as confident, capable and positive.
✓ Use professional language from your field.
✓ Avoid repeating yourself.
✓ Keep your conclusion somewhat short and don’t waste space referencing which documents you are including.
✓ Constantly save cover letters you are working so nothing is lost!

REVIEW, REVISE, REQUEST
When you finish writing the first draft of your letter, take a break and review it later with fresh eyes. Read first for flow and make corrections based on overall clarity. Check for awkward phrases, verb tenses, or excessive wording. Review your cover letter a second time to make changes for proper grammar, spelling, capitalization, and stylization. Make sure to address it to the correct person, spell the position title and organization correctly, and have a recent date at the top. Once you have done all of these things, read it again for optimal professionalism before requesting feedback from trusted mentors, friends, or family members.

Then, save the file as a PDF. Unless otherwise specified, title it with your last name, the organization you are applying to, and the position title (i.e. Smith Cover Letter – Carnegie Hall, Communication Manager). This makes it easy to for both you and the search committee to find and recognize.

Save all of your completed cover letters in a folder for future reference, but do not re-use cover letters verbatim. Each letter should be catered to the specific position for which you are applying.
Date 10, 2020

Full Name of Individual
Institution or Organization
Street Address
City, State ZIP

Dear Ms., Mr., or Dr. [Name indicated on job description],

Opening Paragraph: The idea here is to directly state your application for the opening, making sure to use the exact name of the position and institution for which you are applying. (You might mention how you heard of the job.) Provide a one sentence summary of who you are, such as your schooling, highest degree, or current position, etc. Highlight two to three skills about yourself that matches the position, which not only outlines what is to come in the cover letter, but also compels the reader to continue.

Main Paragraphs: The main body of your cover letter is where you highlight your experience(s) and educational background most relevant to the job. Each paragraph will focus and demonstrate one of the skills mentioned in the first paragraph. Describe any current or past positions, roles, or experiences and focus on your strengths and qualifications as they apply to the job description. Cite specific examples that may be of particular interest to help you stand out as a candidate. If you have no directly related experience, point out applicable or transferable skills and explain how these apply to or fit the desired qualifications listed in the job advertisement.

The objective for the central part of your cover letter is to further develop the reader’s interest in you so they will look at your résumé more closely. To make a connection with the reader, include specific information about their organization – quote part of their mission statement, discuss a project, or highlight the focus of the organization. This is how you demonstrate what attracts you to the job.

Additional paragraphs can be used if you are addressing various concepts in detail. You might mention leadership roles, honors, or awards here or describe your passion for that particular area with an example or two. You could also provide full disclosure of any particular details about your situation: your actual date of graduation (diploma-in-hand, dissertation defense success), or timeline issues as well as extenuating circumstances about leaving your present job, etc.

Closing Paragraph: Reiterate your interest in the position and reassert your confidence in your ability to work in a collaborative manner with the organization. Finally, thank them for the opportunity, that you look forward to hearing from them, and indicate that you are willing to provide more materials if requested.

Sincerely,

(Your Signature)

Your Name

*NOTE: Keep letter to 1, 1.5, or 2 pages. Skip one line between paragraphs and do not indent. Proofread several times to make sure your letter has no spelling or grammatical errors.
November 1, 2021

Ms. Sharon Fitzpatrick
Fayetteville School District
1200 Eastern Blvd
Fayetteville, NC  30267

Dear Ms. Fitzpatrick:

I am writing in response to your advertisement for a Middle School Music Teacher in the Fayetteville School District, as advertised in Eastern Region Music Educator’s Bulletin. In May 2016, I will complete my student teaching requirement at the Eastman School of Music, where I am earning my Bachelor’s degree in Music Education. Professor Marcus Nylan suggested I write directly to you as he thought I was ideally suited to this position due to my string pedagogy knowledge and classroom experience.

During my time at Eastman, I have received extensive training in the violin and varied teaching experience through my student teaching. In addition to two courses in string pedagogy, I have done supplementary work on cello and will be attending the National String Workshop in Wisconsin this summer. For over three years, I have been an assistant to the Rochester Youth Orchestra’s junior high group where I have been responsible for helping students develop individually, leading sectionals, and rehearsing and conducting several works. I also have over two years of experience directing choir, where I have been responsible for the total musical preparation for a group of sixty students along with all aspects of production. These experiences have helped me develop my skills coordinating large groups of young people, focusing their energies on a common musical pursuit.

During my senior year at the Eastman School of Music, I worked as a long-term substitute in Music Education at the School for the Performing Arts. My responsibilities in this position entail the preparation and daily operation of classes for string and wind players grades 6 through 10, and the management of the extracurricular string ensemble. The skills I gained in student motivation and curricula planning during my time at the School for the Performing Arts will enable me to drive student success from the very beginning in this middle school position.

Please find enclosed a copy of my résumé. I am very excited about the opportunities your opening presents and am hoping to secure employment near my family back in North Carolina. I am confident that I have the professional skills to meet the demands of this position. Feel free to contact me at your convenience if I can offer any additional information. I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Sincerely,

Nelly Kellison
June 26, 2012

Leigh Kaulbach
Administrative Assistant Zumix
260 Sumner Street
East Boston, MA 02128

Dear Ms. Kaulbach,

Please accept this cover letter and resume as my application for the position of FAO Schwartz Fellow with Zumix. I am currently finalizing my Master Degree at New England Conservatory in Jazz Studies, while also working in a variety of related position. My diverse teaching background, musical performance and administrative experience is an appropriate fit for the requirements for the fellowship.

I have a wide variety of teaching and leadership experience, including tutoring English, working as a counselor at the Interlochen Summer Arts Camp, leading sectionals with the New England Conservatory Youth Jazz Ensemble, and private one-on-one music instruction. As a music faculty member at Camp Shalom in Ontario, I also gained valuable experience teaching group drum lessons to students ages 7-13, focusing on basic technique, rhythm, and creative expression. In all of these contexts, I aim to tailor my instruction to the students’ musical interests and learning styles.

As an active performer, I have played regularly in Boston in NYC with a range of ensembles spanning genres such as Jazz, Rock, and R&B as a drummer and trombonist. I have founded and performed with ensembles that have appeared at such venues as, The Bitter End, B.B. Kings Blues Club, Jazz at Lincoln Center, Symphony Space, and Glasslands in NYC and Jordan Hall and Yes.Oui.Si in Boston. Through my studies at the New England Conservatory, I also became fluent in key music software including Reason, Ableton Live, GarageBand, and Finale.

Lastly, I have also worked in an administrative capacity to support university and youth education arts programs, most recently at the New England Conservatory in the Jazz Studies Department. In this position, I’ve organized over seven different community outreach concerts connecting professionals with up and coming musicians. Zumix’s mission to empower youth through music resonates with me deeply, as I have experienced firsthand music’s ability to instill a strong sense of community, confidence, and teamwork. I would be excited to contribute to Zumix’s work, further giving back the wealth I have received in my years of study with great artists and mentors.

Above all else, I think my success in both artistic and educational contexts stems from my ability to forge strong connections with people of all backgrounds. This is in large part what has drawn to a life in music—the opportunity to connect with others on a deep level in the service of art. Thank you for your consideration and I hope to have the opportunity to discuss my qualifications and this position further.

Sincerely,

Cale Israel
Dear Dr. Melton,

I am writing to apply for the Piano instructor position at Bowling Green State University beginning fall 2017, as advertised on your department’s website. My experiences as an Associate piano instructor, commitment to music teaching, and solo and chamber piano performer would be a prime fit for Bowling Green State University’s excellent music program.

As an Associate Instructor at Indiana University, I have gained valuable experience teaching the piano to university students in both private and classroom settings. In lessons, I place strong emphasis on higher artistic interpretation and its presentation, tone production, effective learning/practice strategies, posture/alignment, sight-reading, music fundamentals/theory, and ear training. For non-music majors, I incorporate folk, popular and traditional music into the curriculum to match their needs and interests. I have also been an instructor for the past five years at IU’s pre-college Young Pianist program, where I provide private lessons for ages 3-18, preparing students for competitions, music festivals, and university- and college-entrance auditions.

I have a doctoral minor in Music Education from the Eastman School of Music, concentrating on both college-level and elementary/early childhood-level teaching. My coursework has covered a wide range of topics in piano and music pedagogy, and the philosophies of Music Education in the US and Europe. My project on developing a handbook for the piano literature course for undergraduate students received positive recognition from the department. Similar to your own mission, I am committed to an interdisciplinary approach to scholarship and teaching—presenting music in larger historical, social and intellectual contexts.

Like many of your current faculty, my performance experience includes touring for solo recitals in the United States, Japan and the United Kingdom. In addition, I am an active chamber musician – part of the Amaryllis Trio, which received the highest grade in the Royal Overseas League Chamber Competition in 2014. I also regularly collaborate with both instrumentalists and vocalists at Indiana University. Currently, I develop performances at a wide variety of community settings, focusing on both reaching new audiences and recruiting students. Although I am comfortable performing the traditional repertoire, my specialty is contemporary music, having premiered works written by student and faculty composers.

While growing up in Ohio, one of my first summer music camp experiences took place at the Bowling Green State University’s summer piano camp where I studied with Distinguished Teaching Professor Virginia Marks. The prospect of teaching at one of the schools where I had some of my best formative training would be a special honor and would feel like a homecoming. I welcome the opportunity to discuss this position. If you require any additional materials or information, I would be happy to supply it. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely yours,

Mia Everton