**Purposes of the Cover Letter:**

* It introduces you to the prospective employer;
* It allows you to highlight your greatest strengths and skills;
* It persuades the reader to give serious consideration to the accompanying resume;
* It allows you to note why your skill set is a good fit for the particular position;
* It allows you to tell a story—to show the employer one or two major accomplishments, as well as the ways in which they relate to the position;
* It can put a “human” touch on the sometimes mechanical approach applicants use to craft their resumes;
* It allows you to provide some relevant information which is not included on your resume;
* It can serve as a writing sample, letting the potential employer glimpse into your professional writing style and ability. (Note this last purpose carefully—and consider it when you’re drafting your cover letters, which should always be as professionally written as possible and proofread before they are sent out.)

**Tips for Writing a Great Cover Letter:**

* When possible, address the letter to a specific person at the firm or company, and include the person’s full name and title.
* Use the same letterhead, font, and paper you used for your resume, in order to keep your materials consistent.
* Accompany every resume you send out with a personalized—not reproduced—cover letter.
* Use your cover letter to help make your resume more specific to the needs of the employer or organization. You can do this by matching the employer’s needs to your qualifications. For example:
	+ “In your posting, you mention that Smith & Jones, LLC seeks a candidate with landlord/tenant litigation experience. During my two year tenure at Boston Law, I litigated over twenty cases in Housing Court…”
	+ “Smith & Jones, LLC has a solid reputation as a criminal defense firm focusing on DUI and OUI matters. During my law school clinical course, as a student certified under Rule 3:03, I assisted with DUI and OUI matters…”
* Keep your cover letter and your sentences short. Make your paragraphs well-focused on one point.
* Begin your cover letter with an opening which not only grabs the reader’s attention, but also gives you credibility and relevant to the position. Some examples:
	+ Introduction through a mutual acquaintance: “John Smith mentioned yesterday that your firm is expanding and considering the addition of a new Associate in the Corporate practice group…”
	+ Expressing interest in the organization: “As a recent law graduate who concentrated in Criminal Law, I have followed with interest the rise of Smith & Jones, LLP as a respected firm concentrating in criminal defense work…”
	+ Responding to an advertisement: “In response to your recent job posting on the Massachusetts School of Law’s Career Services web page, kindly consider my application for the associate position…”
	+ Establishing a connection to a recent article or news piece about the organization: “Congratulations to Smith & Jones, LLP on your recently announced plans to expand its Litigation practice group…”
* In the main body of your cover letter, describe in a few sentences who you are. Highlight your strengths and positive qualifications for the position.
* End the cover letter with a closing in which you: thank the reader for his or her consideration; express your willingness to provide additional information; and indicate that you wish to meet with the reader at a mutually convenient time to discuss employment possibilities.

Sample Cover Letter:

**John Smith, J.D.**

121 Main Street, Andover, Massachusetts 01810

978-555-1212

j.smith@mslaw.edu

Jamie Jones, Esq.

Managing Partner

Jones & Jones, LLP

321 Elm Street, Suite 304

Boston, Massachusetts

Dear Ms. Jones:

As a recent law graduate who concentrated in Criminal Law, I have followed with interest the rise of Jones & Jones, LLP as a respected firm concentrating in criminal defense work.

In response to your recent job posting on the Massachusetts School of Law’s Career Services web page, kindly consider my application for the position of Associate Attorney. I believe that my experience interning at the Middlesex County District Attorney’s Office, my keen interest in Criminal Law, and my prior work with a sole practitioner focusing largely on criminal matters make me the right fit for this position.

Working as a certified student attorney under Supreme Judicial Court Rule 3:03, I assisted with prosecution of theft offenses, assault and battery charges, and various drug-related crimes. I conducted research and drafted trial memoranda, and I successfully argued two motions in court.

Prior to my internship, I worked with a sole practitioner on various matters involving criminal defense and domestic relations, conducting legal research, drafting litigation documents, and serving as point of contact for clients.

I received my Juris Doctor, cum laude, last year from the Massachusetts School of Law, where I served on the Student Bar Association.

Thank you for your consideration of my application for this position. I look forward to discussing this opportunity with you in person.

Very truly yours,

John Smith, J.D.