

# The Portfolio Cover Letter

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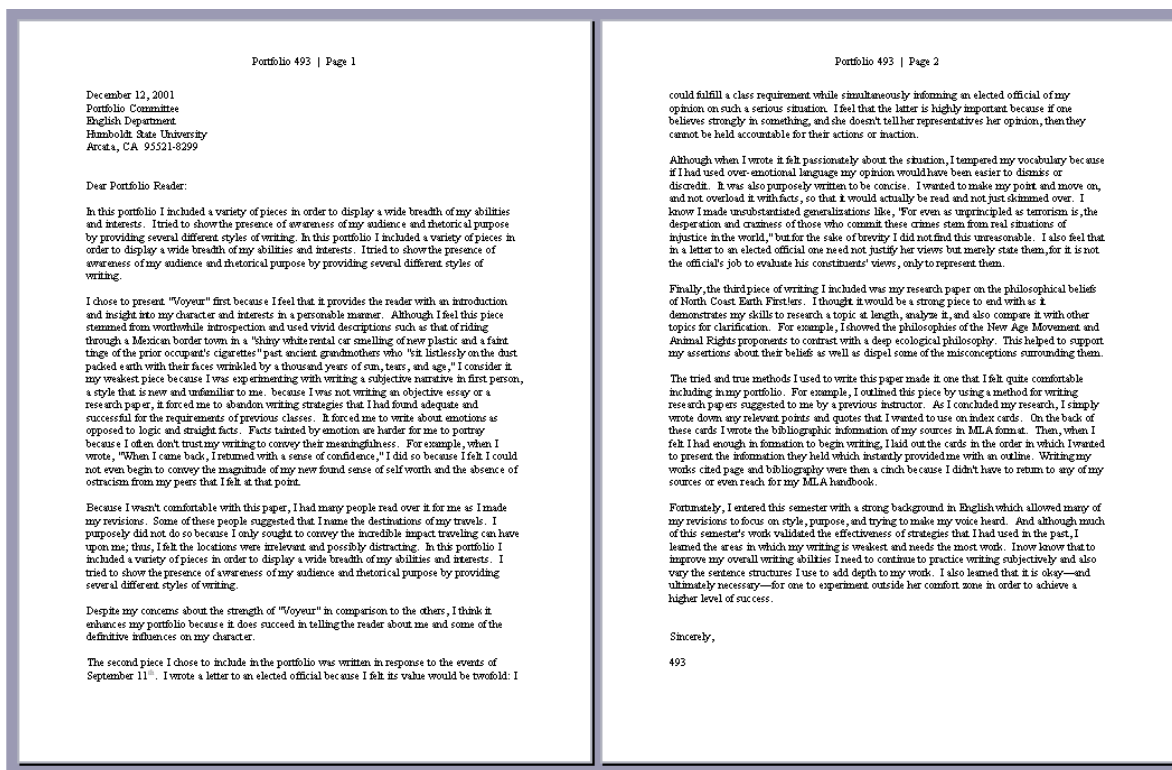
## Cover Letter Content

- Your portfolio cover letter **must meet all of the following criteria:**
  - Be two to three pages long; in other words, it must be over one page in length but must not exceed three full pages.
  - Identify each of the portfolio's submissions—**BY TITLE, NOT BY GENRE**—and explain the writer's reasoning behind selecting and ordering those submissions.
  - Demonstrate sustained writing self-awareness: provide evidence of the writer's ability to be reflective about her/his own writing strengths and weaknesses and the writer's awareness of his/her writing process.
  - Make specific claims about the writer's strengths and weaknesses and point to specific examples from the portfolio submissions that prove the writer's assertions about her/his writing.
  - Demonstrate an awareness of what the writer has learned or of his/her own development as a writer.
  - Demonstrate knowledge of the writing, revising, and editing process by showing how this knowledge applies to the essays in the portfolio.
  - Avoid extensive summary, providing instead an analysis of the writing contained in the portfolio.
- Your cover letter **should also include some** of the following (covering all of them would exceed the cover letter's three-page maximum requirement!):
  - Reveal the ways in which you continue to work at recognizing and rectifying your writing weaknesses.
  - Discuss what you have learned about the topics—readings, writings, themes—your course addressed this semester.
  - Discuss your strategies for writing and revising and point to specific examples in the essays for how those strategies affected the essay.
  - Detail the process by which you solved a writing problem.
  - Reflect on the ways in which you have written/revised to accommodate audience needs, expectations, and/or values.
  - Discuss and provide examples of patterns in your writing.
- Talk to your instructor about how much background information you should provide about your submissions.

A passing portfolio is one that convinces the Portfolio Committee of two features:  
that the writer can successfully compose college-level essays and  
that the writer knows enough about writing to continue improving that skill.  
The portfolio's papers should show the former; the portfolio's cover letter should show the latter.

## Cover Letter Format

- Maintain approximately 1-inch top, bottom, and side margins.
- Insert or write your portfolio and the page number within the header (top margin).
- The letter should be formatted like a standard business letter and include the following left-justified information:
  - The **portfolio's submission date** should appear on the letter's first line. *Skip two lines (hit the "Enter" key three times), and then type:*
  - The **Portfolio Committee's address:**  
Portfolio Committee  
Humboldt State University  
English Department  
Arcata, CA 95521-8299  
*Skip two lines (hit the "Enter" key three times), and then type:*
  - The **salutation:**  
Dear Portfolio Committee:  
*Skip one line (hit the "Enter" key two times), and then type your cover letter.*
- Please note that business letter format requires single-spaced text. To begin a new paragraph, simply skip one line (hit the "Enter" key twice); do not indent the first line of the paragraph.
- Close the letter with an appropriate ending (Sincerely, etc.) and your portfolio number—NOT your name.



For additional ideas about crafting your cover letter—what to include in it, how to organize it—and for sample cover letters that include Portfolio Committee comments, please visit CompPort at [www.humboldt.edu/~compport](http://www.humboldt.edu/~compport).