

Writing a Letter of Intent for a Pharmacy Residency Program

What is the purpose of a Letter of Intent?

A Letter of Intent is a one page document that expresses your interest in completing a particular residency program. After reading your letter, a residency director understands:

- Why you are pursuing residency
- Why their specific residency program is a top choice
- Your goals during residency
- Which of your skills and experiences will help you be successful in the program
- Your future plans after residency (and how the training and experiences in this program will help you achieve those goals)

How is a Letter of Intent different from a Cover Letter or Personal Statement?

People use the terms interchangeably, which can be confusing. As the matrix on page two shows, Letters of Intent, Cover Letters and Personal Statements have both some overlap and some distinct features in regards to their focus, format and length. The key takeaway is this: *Letters or Intent differ from Cover Letters in terms of focus. Letters of Intent primary vary from Personal Statements in terms of format.* Let's look at what that means a little more closely:

- **Letters or Intent differ from Cover Letters in terms of focus:**

For example, a retail pharmacy or hospital position (who are employers who want Cover Letters) hiring a new pharmacist will want to know how your training, skills and experience will benefit their organizations and patients. They will be less interested in how their pharmacy position will help you develop as a professional (which a training program would be interested in). This is the key difference between training and employment opportunities.

- **Letters or Intent differ from Personal Statements in terms of format:**

A graduate program (which often requests a Personal Statement) will want a one page document in an essay format, rather than a business letter format (A business format includes a date, the address of the employer, and your address at the top of the page, and a salutation [sincerely, etc.] and your name at the bottom of the page). But like Personal Statements, a Letter of Intent will include (several sentences/a paragraph) about experiences and interests that led you to pursuing a professional field, why the organization's focus will help you achieve your personal and professional goals, how your skills and experience prepared you to succeed in the program and your long term professional goals will be met by attending the program.

Additionally, Personal Statements have a chronological narrative format, while Letters of Intent use a more structured 'argument' format. Chronological narratives can sometimes begin with your childhood, or a story, and weave it's way around to illustrate who you are and what is important to you. Letters of Intent usually have a tighter format, where you clearly articulate your goals after residency, and how your skills and experiences have prepared you for the clinical, research, teaching, or interpersonal challenges you will face in residency.

Have a look at the sample Letters of Intent on page three to illustrate these points.

A Summary of the differences between Letters of Intent, Cover Letter and Personal Statements

	Letter of Intent	Cover Letter	Personal Statement
Audience	A residency program	An employer	An academic program's admission committee
Purpose	Explains: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Your goals on the other side of residency How your current skills & experience prepare you to meet those goals How you can contribute and learn from that particular residency program (Why residency, why that particular residency program?) 	Explains: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How your current skills and experience will solve the employers problem/meet their needs/help them achieve their goals. Why you are specifically interested in that position. 	Explains: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What led you to pharmacy? Why you think you're a good fit for that program/institution. Your accomplishments so far.
Focus	Does include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Why you are pursuing residency Why their specific residency program is a top choice Detailed information (several sentences) on how the position will help you develop as a professional to achieve your long term goals. A brief summary of how your skills and experiences will help you be successful in the program Your future plans after residency Does not include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Detailed information (several sentences/a paragraph) about your childhood, personal experiences pre-pharmacy school 	Does include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A statement of your interest in the position How your skills and experience are a good fit for a specific internship or job One sentence about how this position is a good fit based on your career path. Does not include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Detailed information (a paragraph) on how this position will help you develop as a professional to achieve your long term goals 	Does include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Detailed information (several sentences/a paragraph) about experiences and interests that led you to pursuing a professional field Why the program's focus will help you achieve your professional goals How your skills and experience prepared you to succeed in the program Your long term goals
Format	Business letter format: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Date Residency program address Opening salutation 3-5 paragraphs of text making the case <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Why your skills and experience both prepare you for residency <u>And</u> why this program will give you the key skills needed to achieve your long term professional goals. Closing salutation Name 	Business letter format: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Date Residency program address Opening salutation 3-5 paragraphs of text making the case <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Why your skills and experience both prepare you for residency <u>Do not</u> include information about how this job will help you achieve your long term goals. Closing salutation Name 	Essay format <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 3-5 paragraphs May contain several stories to illustrate your development. Can be a chronological narrative, starting with your childhood.
Length	One – two pages	Limited to one page	Limited to 300-500 words (one page)

December 1, 0000

Dr. Peter Parker
123 Superhero Drive
San Francisco, CA 94143

Dear Dr. Parker:

I am writing to express my interest in applying for the PGY-1 pharmacy practice residency at the University of Oregon Hospitals. I have had the pleasure to meet with your current residents at the ASHP Midyear Clinical Meeting, and with Dr. Dick Grayson and Dr. Shiera Sanders Hall to learn more about the residency program. Your program offers many experiences that I look for in a PGY-1 program, including a wide variety of rotations, teaching, research, community outreach, and a challenging yet supportive environment to refine my skills as a clinical pharmacist.

I firmly believe that I have the skills and qualities to be a successful resident at your program - a balance of pharmacy and clinical practice, service, leadership, teaching, and research. As you can see from my CV, my experience includes solid background in hospital pharmacy at UC Medical Center along with a range of clinical experience in community, ambulatory and acute care settings throughout the San Francisco Bay Area. From those experiences I gained an understanding of best clinical practices, how to provide care for a diverse patient population, and work effectively on interdisciplinary teams. As a PGY-1 resident, my primary goal is to advance my clinical knowledge and critical thinking skills in different clinical settings to provide optimal patient care. At The University Of Oregon, the variety in rotation opportunities, along with the strong faculty mentorship offers a balance of support and autonomy I seek. After a PGY-1 training, my plan is to pursue a specialized training. My current areas of interest include critical care and infectious diseases, as I enjoy the challenging nature of working as a part of a multidisciplinary team focused on tackling complex clinical cases.

My long term career goal is to practice in an academic medical center affiliated with a school of pharmacy, combining clinical practice with both didactic and experiential teaching experience. My teaching experience includes an MS in Education, and I have served as a tutor for the past two years. It has been incredibly rewarding to find engaging ways to help fellow students make the connection between the required clinical knowledge and an actual clinical experience. I would welcome additional opportunities to serve as an instructor and preceptor for student pharmacists. The training provided through completing OU's clinical teaching certificate, appeals to me as it offers the chance to gain a more thorough understanding of how to design the curriculum in a course, classroom management skills and even more strategies to engage struggling students.

Furthermore, I have also been actively involved in clinical research. My research, under Dr. Barry Allen at UCSF, is an evaluation of the effectiveness of Clinical Pharmacist interventions to reduce medication errors on UC Medical Center's pediatric units. I had the opportunity to present my work at APhA's 0000 conference; it was incredible to share our results and realize that there were long term benefits that could effect best practices nationwide. I plan to continue in this area of research and utilize my skills to conduct a successful and publishable residency project.

Lastly, my dedication to service is demonstrated through my involvement in organizing health fairs and student-run clinics, and I am eager to actively participate in the community outreach efforts at UO. In my work I have been an effective and proactive leader; I think is in part due to the fact that my mentors and experience have taught me key skills: how to develop a strategy and achievable goals, engage my team, identify clear milestones and recognize individual and group success. With these skills, I've made significant contributions to my school and various professional organizations on local, regional, and national levels. I am most proud of my efforts as APhA's social chair – where we focused on developing 2 events per quarter (including bowling nights and cheese tasting events with faculty and staff) with the goal of making first and second year students feel welcome, and feel at home at UCSF. 70% of the students from each of the classes attended at least one of these community-building events.

The PGY-1 Residency Program at UO Hospitals will provide me with the opportunity to further develop my clinical knowledge, critical thinking, teaching, research, and leadership skills to needed for me to achieve my goal: to become a well-rounded pharmacist who has the skills to care for my patients and support my colleagues. I look forward to the opportunity to visit your institution, and thank you for your consideration of my application.

Sincerely,

Hal Jordan