

Cover Letter GUIDE

A cover letter accompanies your resume and, together, they serve to introduce you to an employer. The cover letter must be well-crafted, customized to the position you are applying to, and well-written to make a good first impression.

A good cover letter shows the employer precisely how you meet the qualifications for the position and serves as a writing sample to highlight your written communication skills.



Your Street Address
City, State Zip Code
Date

Contact Name
Title and/or Department
Organization Name
Street Address
City, State Zip Code

Dear Mr. _____, Ms. _____, or Hiring Manager,

Opening Paragraph

In your first paragraph, attract the reader's attention. State your reasons for writing, indicating the position or type of work for which you are applying and how you learned about the job opening and/or the employer. State why you are interested in the position/employer/the field. Focus on something that sets this organization apart from similar employers and why that appeals to you. State why you are qualified for the role, i.e., what you can do for them.

Second Paragraph

Explain your background for the employer. Elaborate on which of your experiences have prepared you to meet the specific requirements of the position. Don't just tell them about your skills: show them with specific examples. This could include how your academic background makes you a qualified candidate. Do not reiterate all the information that is on your resume, but rather focus on a few key points that highlight how your skills/experience match up with what the employer is looking for.

Closing Paragraph

Indicate your desire for a meeting or interview and how they can contact you to follow up. Include your contact information (email and phone number). Thank the reader for their consideration and reiterate your enthusiasm for the position/company

Sincerely,
Your Name

► Tips for Success

Cover the Resume—It is proper business etiquette to include a cover letter with your resume, even if it is not specifically requested. If you are emailing your resume, write a brief introductory paragraph body of the email and attach your resume and cover letter to the email.

Customize your Letter—Don't just send a generic letter with all your applications where you change the name of the company and position only. Employers can spot a form letter a mile away. This sends the message that you do not really care about the position.

Contact Information—Include the name, correct spelling, and job title of the person to whom you are writing. If it is not stated in the position or you are unable to identify the receiver, address the letter to "Hiring Manager."

Get Their Attention—Engage the reader and state the reason you are writing to them in the first paragraph. Include the name of the position you are applying to and mention where you learned about the position, particularly if it was through a network connection.

Be Positive—Express your eagerness and excitement to contribute to the organization's success.

Do Your Research—Know something about the company's products, services, mission, or values and reference this in your letter. This way you'll be able to mention specific reasons the job or company appeals to you.

Keep Your Audience in Mind—Focus on what YOU can do for the EMPLOYER, not what you will get out of the experience. Describe how your skills and experience make you a great candidate for this position.

Use Specific Examples—Don't just state that you have experience, back it up with evidence! Rather than repeating what you have on your resume, elaborate on two or three key skills/experiences and describe how they directly relate to the position you are applying to.

Align with the Job Description—After identifying all of the skills, experiences and qualities the employer is seeking, select three or four that you think are very important to the position. Then, provide an example of a time when you developed and demonstrated those traits.

Write Well and Proof Read—Employers scrutinize the letter for proper grammar, spelling, style, and coherence of thought. If your cover letter is sloppy, they will assume this is a sample of how you work. Remember, good writing involves writing multiple drafts. Don't expect to put together a cover letter in just a few minutes. It's better to take the time to review and revise what you've written.

Stop into the Career Services and Advising Center during walk-in hours with any questions you have about cover letters, or to have your cover letter reviewed by an advisor.

► Format

- Use proper business format (see on reverse).
- Pay attention to details such as alignment, spacing, and overall layout.
- Be brief! Cover letters should be limited to one page, 3-4 paragraphs at most.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT

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