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Cover Letter Writing Guide

What is a Cover Letter?

The cover letter allows you to expand and elaborate on information contained in your résumé. It is a summary of your highlighted experiences that also includes your overall objective. An effective cover letter is specifically tailored for the position to which you are applying. You should always include a cover letter when applying for a job, whether you apply by email or in person.

Cover Letter Writing Checklist

Check mark as you go!

- You've used an appropriate, business format for your letter
- Your cover letter is no more than one page in length
- You have researched and gone over the job description of the position you are applying for
- The first paragraph states the title of the position for which you are applying, along with a brief description of why you are interested in the position
- The second paragraph refers the reader to the résumé by highlighting examples of specific experiences that relate directly to the qualifications and job responsibilities of the position
- You have used the language the employer uses in the job description in your writing
- The final paragraph thanks the reader for considering your application, and indicates your interest in discussing the position in an interview setting
- You are providing specific examples from your experiences, not just copying the description from your résumé
- Your contact information is included on the cover letter
- You have addressed the letter to a specific hiring manager using: "Dear Mr./Ms." OR "Dear First Last Name" OR "Dear Hiring Manager"
- Your cover letter is free of spelling and grammatical errors
- You've had at least one other person read over your cover letter

Cover Letter Tips

- Your cover letter must be focused and specific for the position to which you are applying
- Research the organization, and get to know the job description/posting very well
- Appearance counts! Make sure margins are even, and try to balance the letter on the page
- Use the same font and text size in your cover letter as in your résumé
- Keep your font consistent throughout entirety of the cover letter
- Always address the recipient by his /her title and last name (Mr. Smith/Ms. Smith) even if the individual is an acquaintance or someone you know very well
 - Do NOT use "Mrs." to address the hiring manager
 - If unsure of gender, address the recipient with first name and last name
- Do NOT introduce yourself by name in the first paragraph (i.e. "My name is Suzy Smith.")
- Vary your sentence structure- do not start every sentence with "I"
- Pay attention to the qualifications sought in the job posting/description and highlight the ones you have in your cover letter
- Be absolutely certain that your cover letter has zero typos, misspellings or grammatical errors--the cover letter is your very FIRST impression to the employer
- Keep a copy of each letter you send - this serves as a record of your contacts for each position

Keep this heading the same
format as your résumé



NAME

City, State (*optional*) | Personal/Professional Email | Phone

Date (ex: *March 22, 2020*)

First and Last Name
Their position/title

Company Name
Address
City, State, Zip-code

Dear Ms./Mr./Dr. Last Name:

*Use *Dear Hiring Manager*: if you cannot find a name

The first paragraph of your cover letter should get the reader's attention, stimulate interest, and be appropriate for the job you are seeking. You should make your goal clear to readers. You must mention what position you are interested in or applying for. It is also appropriate to mention where you learned of the job opening.

For the body paragraph, or second paragraph, focus on your two or three strongest qualifications for the position you are applying for. Even only one strong qualification is enough to discuss in a cover letter. This section can be split into two paragraphs if needed, but remember, your letter as a whole should not exceed one typed page! **Don't just paraphrase what can be found in your résumé.** Be sure to illustrate what you personally bring to the position with specific details, and you should demonstrate how your experiences will benefit the employer.

In the final paragraph, you should thank the reader for taking the time to read and consider your application. Reiterate your interest in the position, and why you are a fit for the position. Let them know that you are excited about the opportunity to further discuss your résumé and the job description.

Remember to write "Sincerely" or a similar closing, and then type your full name.

Sincerely,

Your Full Name