



Center for Student Experience & Career Development: 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 Contact Name 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 of the job opening and/or the employer. State why you are interested in the position, the employer, and/or 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

Interpret your background for the employer. Explain which of your experiences have prepared you to meet the specific requirements of the position, and specify how. For example, explain how your academic background makes you a qualified candidate. Do not rewrite your entire resume; rather, elaborate on a few important points that relate to the qualifications sought by the employer.

Closing Paragraph

Indicate your desire for a meeting or an interview. Make sure to list your phone number and email address, even though it is already on your resume. Thank the reader for their time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Full 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 in the 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 only change the name of the company and position. 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 job posting you are applying for 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 these 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 Proofread—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.

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, three to four paragraphs at most.