Your cover letter has a life expectancy of about eight seconds, so it must be brief, yet informative.

Formulating the Cover Letter
From EEO Trust bimonthly magazine

There are two types of cover letters—those that draw the reader in and entice him or her to read your résumé and those that eliminate you from the running before they even get read.

The cover letter serves as the introduction to your résumé; your résumé should always be accompanied by a cover letter. Revise the cover letter for each position. Be sure to include your career objective in the cover letter, and tailor it to the advertisement to which you are responding or to the advice you received through your professional network.

Studies indicate that your cover letter has a life expectancy of about eight seconds, so it must be brief, yet informative. The letter should have three recognizable parts: the opening, which explains why you are writing (“I’m responding to your advertisement ...”); the main body, which demonstrates competencies you have achieved; and the closing, which expresses a desire for future communication. Be sure your letter draws a connection between the needs of the employer and the skills you can bring to the job.

While the experience of the applicants in the samples on the next page is undoubtedly different from your own, you can adapt the format to suit your individual career search needs. Notice they all share the following attributes:

- They are written in a business letter format and have a neat, professional look.
- The first paragraph of each letter explains the purpose and generates interest.
- The body of each letter focuses on what the writer can offer, not what the writer wants.
- The style of the letter is conversational but still businesslike. They do not use a lot of jargon or cumbersome sentences.

Sample Cover Letters
General outline for a cover letter

- Use résumé header as letterhead.
- Use complete title and address.
- If possible, address it to a particular person by name.
- Be careful to use Mr., Ms., or Dr. If a name is not available, address it to an appropriate title within the organization, such as Human Resources Manager, Hiring Manager, or Department Manager. Do not address the letter Dear Sir or To Whom it May Concern.
- Make the addressee want to read your résumé. Be personable and be enthusiastic.
- Ensure that all margins are equal.
- Always sign letters above your typed name.
- If a résumé or other enclosure is included, note it in the letter.
- Save the letter as a .pdf file.
Letter for entry-level position/first-time job seeker

Amy Schoenfeld
15 Avenue Drive
Brooklyn, NY 55555

August 15, 2014
Ms. Joan Sampson
Vice President
ABC, Inc.
2301 Walnut Grove Lane
St. Louis, MO 27555

Dear Ms. Sampson:

I am seeking a position in journalism with a high quality publisher where I can utilize my writing skills. In speaking with Sue Anderson, she suggested I contact you directly to learn more about editing positions with ABC, Inc.

As you will note from the enclosed résumé, I have majored in magazines in the School of Journalism and Mass Communications at Drake University. As an editor of Drake Magazine, I have extensive editorial, proofreading, layout and design experience. My education and extracurricular activities have taught me the importance of teamwork in meeting critical production deadlines. I take pride in being organized, handle pressure well, enjoy collaborating with a variety of people, and have great enthusiasm for my work and studies.

I would like to learn more about entry-level editing positions at ABC, Inc. I will follow up with you next week to discuss my qualifications or to answer any questions you might have. Thank you in advance for your assistance.

Sincerely,

Amy Schoenfeld

Letter for experienced job seeker

Cory Lawrence
5 Clove Road
Staten Island, NY 55555

March 27, 2014
Richard Patterson
Section Manager
Webcor Corporation
16399 W. Bernardo Drive
San Diego, CA 92177

Dear Mr. Patterson:

I would like to apply for the position of marketing representative at your San Diego facility as advertised in the Sunday, March 24 issue of the San Diego Journal.

At XYZ Company, we use a number of your products, and as a laboratory scientist here, I have become very familiar with their design, precision and reliability. Your upcoming project of applying micromachines in automatic control systems interests me a great deal and, as the enclosed résumé states, fits well with my background.

I would appreciate the opportunity to discuss how my education and experience are consistent with your needs. Please take the time to review my qualifications, and I will contact you within two weeks to talk about the possibility of arranging an interview. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Cory Lawrence

Networking letter

Bucky Fellini
453 Mulholland Drive
Ankeny, IA 50023

August 19, 2014
Ms. Aimee Leader
Director of Human Resources
Webcor Int.
3859 Prospect Lane
Milwaukee, WI 53210

Dear Ms. Leader:

You may recall that we met last week at the Meet the Employers networking event, and had an interesting conversation about your role at The Trane Company. I appreciated the time you spent with me and am writing to inquire about scheduling a time for us to continue our discussion. I hope you may be able to offer advice on matters such as career opportunities and trends in the sector, conducting an effective job search and how best to uncover job leads.

As I explained, my background in marketing and graphic design has helped me develop strong collaborative organizational and planning skills as well as a creative approach to problem solving.

I am focusing on increasing my knowledge and understanding of the HR sector. I will contact you next week to arrange a convenient time to set up a meeting that should only take 15-20 minutes.

Sincerely,

Bucky Fellini

Post-event letter

Peter Murphy
453 Mulholland Drive
Ankeny, IA 50023

August 19, 2014
Mr. Bob Zander
Director of Human Resources
The Trane Company
540 8th St.
Milwaukee, WI 53205

Dear Mr. Zander:

I was given your name by a mutual acquaintance of ours, Jane Contact, who suggested that I contact you for assistance with my career aspirations. As I explained, my background in marketing and graphic design has helped me develop strong collaborative organizational and planning skills as well as a creative approach to problem solving.

I am currently exploring the possibility of moving into the field of human resources management, and Jane thought that you might be able to offer some guidance and direction.

I am seeking the advice of human resource professionals regarding the best steps to enter the field. I would appreciate an opportunity to discuss your experience. I am hoping that you may be able to offer advice on matters such as career opportunities and trends in the sector, conducting an effective job search, and how best to uncover job leads.

My background is currently in marketing and graphic design, which has helped me develop strong collaborative organizational and planning skills as well as a creative approach to problem solving.

I am focusing on increasing my knowledge and understanding of the HR sector. I will contact you next week to arrange a convenient time to set up a meeting that should only take 15-20 minutes.

Sincerely,

Peter Murphy