

Cover Letter Guide

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



Formatting the Cover Letter

There are two types of cover letters - those that draw the reader in and entice them to read your resume and those that eliminate you from the running before they even get read.

The cover letter serves as the introduction to your resume; your resume 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 job posting to which you are responding or to the advice you received through your professional network.

The letter should have three recognizable parts:

1. The opening, which explains why you are writing ("I'm applying to your position...")
2. The main body, which demonstrates competencies you have achieved
3. The closing, which expresses desire for future communication and thanks the reader for their time

Be sure your letter draws 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 business-like. They do not use a lot of jargon or cumbersome sentences.

General Outline for a Cover Letter

1. Use resume header as letterhead
2. Use complete title and address of recipient
3. If possible, address to a particular person by name
4. 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 Team, or Department manager. Do not address the letter "Dear Sir" or "To Whom it May Concern"
5. Make the addressee want to read your resume. Be personable and enthusiastic
6. Ensure all margins are equal
7. If possible, sign letter above your typed name
8. Save the letter as a PDF file

Your Name

Mailing Address
City, State, Zip Code

Telephone Number(s)
Email Address

Date of Letter

Employer's Name and Title
Company
Employer's Mailing Address
City, State, Zip Code

Salutation:

Opening Paragraph: State why you are writing, name the position or type of work for which you are applying and mention how you heard of the opening or organization. Explain why you are interested in working for this employer.

Middle Paragraph(s): Specify your reasons for desiring this type of work. If you have had relevant work experience or related education, be sure to point it out, but do not reiterate your entire résumé. Emphasize skills or abilities you have that relate to the job for which you are applying.

Be sure to do this in a confident manner. Remember also that the reader will view your letter of application as an example of your writing skills. This paragraph(s) is designed to entice the reader to look beyond the letter to your résumé.

Closing paragraph: You may refer the reader to your enclosed résumé (which gives a summary of your qualifications) or whatever media you're using to illustrate your training, interests and experience. Have an appropriate closing to pave the way for the interview by indicating the action or steps you will take to initiate an interview date. (For example, I can be reached at the phone number above to arrange an interview or I will contact you soon.)

Sincerely,

(Signature)

Applicant's Name, typed

Enclosure