

Cover Letters

Connect your experience to the employer's needs

WHAT IS A COVER LETTER?

A cover letter accompanies the resume, and tells the employer the type of position you're seeking -- and exactly how you are qualified for that position. It's not a duplication of your resume, but an enhancement that highlights the aspects of your experience that are most useful to the potential employer.

FORMATTING

- Use business letter format
- Use a business font such as Times New Roman or Arial
- Save the file under your full name, (ex: Steven_Anderson.pdf)

CONTENT

- Avoid using "To whom it may concern or non-tailored greetings. Try to find the recipient's name and title if possible
- Include three or four body paragraphs
- Write concisely, using action verbs, simple language and uncomplicated sentences to explain your qualifications
- Research the organization and use that information to explain why you want to work there
- Identify the key skills from the job description and give specific examples explaining how your experience matches those key skills
- End with a professional closure such as "Sincerely," "Regards," or "Yours truly"

COVER LETTER DOS AND DON'TS

DON'T

- Don't ever send your resume without a cover letter
- Don't use such clichés as "Enclosed please find my resume"
- Don't rehash your resume. Use your cover letter to highlight the aspects of your resume that are relevant to the position, but you're wasting the potential employer's time if you simply repeat your resume
- Don't forget to personally sign the letter in black or blue ink. Scan and create a digital signature for emailed cover letters

DO

- Do address your letter to a named individual
- Do write cover letters that are unique and specific to you
- Do keep your to one page. Each paragraph should have no more than one to three sentences
- Do tell the employer how you can meet his or her needs and contribute to the company
- Do distinguish your cover letter from those of other job-seekers by quantifying and giving examples that amplify and prove the claims you make in your letter

Your Street Address or P.O. Box
City, State Zip Code

Current Date (Month 00, 201_)

Employer's Name
Title
Company/Organization
Address
City, State Zip Code

Dear (Dr./Mr./Ms./Mrs.) Name:

In the first paragraph, include the specific job title for which you are applying and where you found the position (newspaper, website, etc.). Next comes what your degree is in and when you graduate(d). State why you are interested in the position and include a hook line.

Show that you've done your research on the company by referencing the specific aspects of their company that impress you. It is important to show candidate to company match.

Next, take the position description and for each skill/quality they want, list why you have that or how you've done that in the past. The more your cover letter mirrors the position description and the organization's needs, the better. Let's say the position description requires someone with excellent interpersonal skills, experience in customer service, and initiative. Give some examples that illustrate how you have developed or used each of those skills or qualities.

In the last paragraph, you want to reiterate your interest, give your contact information (email and phone number).

Sincerely/Warmest regards/Cordially/Yours truly,

Virginia C. Student

Always proofread your cover letter to check for spelling and grammatical errors

Cover Letter Rubric

Salutation

Meets Minimum

- An appropriate salutation is used (e.g. "Dear")
- Do not address the letter using "To whom it may concern"
- Use "Dear Hiring Manager" only if the person's name is not available.
- Make an effort to address the letter to an individual

Exceeds Minimum

- Research employer (LinkedIn/Google/Call) for the contact's name and title

Opening Paragraph

Meets Minimum

- The opening paragraph establishes purpose and provides details to support the position application
- The content states why the applicant is a strong candidate for the position
- Avoid trite or overused phrases such as "hard working" and "self-starter"

Exceeds Minimum

- Name a mutual acquaintance or identify people through a contact you made within the organization
- Answer how you were introduced to the organization
- Articulate briefly why this position is ideal for you

Body

Meets Minimum

- Content "sells" the candidate and focuses on employers needs, explaining how the candidate will be valuable to the organization
- The word "I" is not overused
- Letter is no longer than one page and includes three to four paragraphs
- Appropriate punctuation is used
- There are no typographical or grammatical errors
- Content is concise and provides details about the candidate's skills and experience as they relate to the job

Exceeds Minimum

- Avoids common or trite verbiage such as "self-starter", "Strong written", "communication skills" and "hard working"
- Letter concentrates on the requirements that will be most highly valued to the organization as determined from its website and mission statement or strategic plan
- Provide a position number if applicable



Cover Letter Rubric

Contact Information/Formatting

Meets Minimum

- Your address (include city, state, street and zip code)
- The current date at the top of the letter
- Recipient's name, position, title, company and company address

Exceeds Minimum

- Cover letter and resume when placed side-by-side appear branded and consistent

Closing Paragraph

Meets Minimum

- The closing includes a well-written statement thanking the organization for considering you for the position
- The closing motivates action from the organization or the reader

Exceeds Minimum

- Unless instructed not to call, your closing can identify when you plan to
- follow up with a phone call to learn the next steps in the hiring process

Signature

- The content mentions the enclosed/attached resume
- Four line spaces between the closing and the person's name for the signature are included and the letter is signed. No italic font for signature.
- If sending electronically, it is acceptable to skip a physical signature

