

Cover Letter Guide

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

Current Date (Month 00, 201_)

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

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

Open your cover letter with a short, engaging story. Perhaps you'll explain how you found the organization or why you'd like to work there. You could talk about why you were drawn to your career path. Or, you could highlight a key piece of your experience you want the organization to know about right away. No matter what you choose, make it simple, compelling (first impressions matter!), and obvious that you've done your research on the organization or role.

Now that you've caught their attention, tell the hiring manager why you're the one for the job. In this section, you'll want to pick two or three skills, as well as supporting facts or stories that showcase those qualifications.

You'll want to communicate the most compelling information about your background possible, so they may be slightly different for each role you apply to. Take a look at the job description (or, better yet, find someone on the inside who can give you the real scoop). What does the hiring manager need most in the person who fills this position, and what in that vein do you bring to the table? That overlap is where you want to focus.

You've caught their eye, you've talked about your skills, and now it's time to bring it all together with a quick wrap-up that summarizes all of the above. You can also use this section to give the hiring manager any other information that's not obvious from your application, or reiterate your excitement for the organization or role. Bring it all together, and you've got a compelling cover letter that is bound to catch a hiring manager's eye.

Sincerely,

Virginia C. Student

Tip 1:
Always proofread your cover letter to check for spelling and grammatical errors.



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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 as a PDF under your full name, (ex: Steven_Anderson.pdf)

Content

- Try to find the recipient's name and title if possible, or if unknown write "Dear Hiring Manager"
- 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 Guide - Do's And Don'ts

DO

- Do write cover letters that are unique and specific to you
- Do keep your letter 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
- Scan and create a digital signature for emailed cover letters

DON'T

- Don't use clichés such 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
- Don't use trite or overused phrases such as "hard working," "self-starter" and "strong written communication skills"
- Don't overuse "I" throughout your cover letter.
- Don't use italic font for your signature.



Cover Letter Guide - Checklist

Contact Information/Formatting

- Your address (include city, state, street and zip code)
- The date that the cover letter/application is being submitted
- Recipient's name, title, company and company address
- If appropriate for your industry, use the same header as your resume

Salutation

- An appropriate salutation is used (e.g. "Dear")
- Make an effort to address the letter to an individual
- Research employer (LinkedIn/Google/Call) for the contact's name and title
- Use "Dear Hiring Manager:" only if the person's name is not available
- Use a colon in formal writing

Opening Paragraph

- The opening paragraph establishes purpose and provides details to support the position application
- Provide a hook line for the employer on why you're interested and would be a good fit for this position
- Name a mutual acquaintance or identify people through a contact you made within the organization
- Answer how you were introduced to the organization

Body

- Content "sells" the candidate and focuses on employer's needs, explaining how the candidate will be valuable to the organization
- Content should show and not tell the employer how the candidate will be valuable and can contribute to the organization; give examples
- Content is concise and provides details about the candidate's skills and experience as they relate to the job
- 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
- Avoid contractions in formal writing

Closing Paragraph

- 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 and demonstrates your interest in interviewing for the role
- The closing includes your contact information

Signature

- Four line spaces between the closing and the person's name for the signature are included, and a digital signature is included

General Formatting for Letter

- Appropriate punctuation is used
- There are no typographical or grammatical errors
- Letter is no longer than one page and includes three to four paragraphs
- Cover letter and resume when placed side-by-side appear branded and consistent

