

Writing Cover Letters

A cover letter is used in conjunction with your resume. The cover letter is a formal letter that serves as a personalized introduction of yourself to potential employers. A cover letter allows you to clearly express your interests to an employer, highlight relevant items of your resume, relate your skills to match the employer's needs, and finally, to make the employer want to read your resume. The ultimate goal of your cover letter is to secure an interview so it should have a strong positive impact on the employer.

Things to do before you start writing

Know your strengths, abilities, and career goals. You will need to use this information in a cover letter.

Research

Research the organization to try to avoid generic cover letters. As much as possible you want to personalize your letters to employers to show you are interested in their particular organization.

Cover Letter Rules

Make the effort to locate the contact person in the organization to whom you should address your letter. If you are unable to find a contact person, do not use generic salutations such as: To Whom it May Concern or Dear Sir/Madame. Instead, use no salutation and just begin the text of the letter.

- Always introduce yourself and indicate the position for which you are applying. If you were referred by someone, include their name.
- Do not reiterate your entire resume. Highlight relevant experience and skills. Demonstrate a match between your skills and abilities and the challenges that exist with the position.
- Stimulate reader interest by supporting your candidacy for the job by providing specific examples of your qualifications.
- Remember to enclose your resume
- Use spell check and proofread your letter for grammatical errors.
- Keep your letter to one page. Laser print the letter on the same high quality paper as the resume.

- Do not wait until the last minute to write your cover letter. Cover letters take time to write properly and you may need to write several drafts before sending one.
- In your conclusion, be sure to tell the reader you will be following up with a phone call.
- Don't forget to sign your letter in ink.

Cover Letter Components

- **Address** (Use the address you want the organization to respond to)
- **Date** - Use the current date
- **Name and Address of Organization**
- **Salutation**
- **Opening Paragraph**
State why you are writing, name the position or type of work you are applying for, and mention how you heard about the opening. If you were referred, mention their name in this paragraph. Also, briefly discuss why you are interested in working for the employer and your reasons for wanting to work in this area/field. The opening paragraph sets the tone for the rest of the letter.
- **Body of Letter**
 - *First Paragraph*
This paragraph gives you the opportunity to market your skills to an employer. Outline what you have to offer the employer and why you would be successful in the position. Discuss personal qualities, skills, knowledge, education, training, experiences, and achievements that are most related to the position. Don't just list what's on your resume, but choose the most related experiences to describe and give examples of what you've done.
 - *Second Paragraph*
For many individuals, the optional second paragraph provides additional information in support of their candidacy. Discuss how your skills would be transferable to their organization. Discuss why you would be a productive part of their organization.