



## Cover Letter Writing Guide

### Getting Started

A cover letter is an important component of your application package. The purpose of a cover letter is to highlight your accomplishments, projects, or skills that align with the requirements of the position. Writing a cover letter is an opportunity to convey special information that is not on your resume, but which may be of particular interest to the employer. While a resume includes your professional “facts,” a cover letter is a chance to tell a story, to weave together how your experiences, mostly professional but can also include personal, uniquely qualify you for a job. A cover letter should reflect your personality, convey enthusiasm, and showcase your writing ability, however, it should not deviate widely from conventional business formats.

### Analyze the Job Description and Review Your Experiences

Read through the employer’s listing carefully to identify the required qualifications and the job’s responsibilities. Also, do some homework about the employer – look at the website and speak to professionals who may know of the employer and its reputation and achievements. If there is no job description available or the one posted is unclear, research similar jobs at other organizations to get an idea of what skills and background are likely to be associated with the position. You may also contact the organization to request specific details. After identifying the desired qualifications, review and analyze how your abilities, experiences, and skills are relevant to the responsibilities for the job. Incorporate as many keywords from the job posting into your cover letter as you can. Remember that the hiring manager wants to know what you can do for them.

### Things to Keep in Mind

- Each letter should be tailored to a specific position and addressed, when possible, to a specific individual such as the hiring manager or the head of the department, division, or organization.
- Emphasize your skills and experiences as they relate to the position. Tell a story, provide context, not merely repeat content on your resume.
- Demonstrate to the employer that you’ve done your research by connecting the position to your skills and experience. Tie the bullet points to the job description.
- Proofread your letter carefully for typos and errors. Don’t rely on spell-check.
- Look at your sentence openings to make sure they vary—don’t start them all with “I”.
- If you’re emailing your materials, include the title of the position you’re applying for in the subject line.
- Recruiters and hiring managers vary in their preferences for receiving cover letters. Some prefer Word documents or PDFs attached to an email, while others like the letter to be in the body of an email.
- When sending resume and cover letter via email, combine them together into a single document.



## Cover Letter Template:

When submitting your application material via email, omit both your and the addressee's contact information, as well as the date. Simply start with the salutation.

Street Address  
City, State Zip code

Month Day, Year

Contact Full Name  
Title (if known)  
Organization Name  
Street Address  
City, State Zip code

Dear Mr./Ms./Dr. Last Name: (use colon)

**Opening paragraph:** Introduce yourself by stating your degree program and the year in which you will graduate. Clearly state why you are writing - indicate the position title. If you were referred to the position from someone within the organization, or by someone the addressee knows, mention that as well. You may want to add a sentence on why you feel you are a good fit for the position. This is a way to state your "thesis statement" of why you are a great candidate for the position.

**Middle paragraph(s):** Write one or two paragraphs that explain why you are interested in working for this particular employer and/or specify your reasons for desiring this type of work, especially when you are changing fields. You may want to include a few sentences on how your interest in both the job and the organization developed and how your personal qualities match with the position. Elaborate on how you have developed the relevant skills required for the job (i.e. show supporting evidence for your thesis statement in the opening paragraph), and any relevant experiences or education you have acquired. Provide an example to help you emphasize your point. Delineate why it would be a logical decision to hire you. Select only those details that will be of greatest interest to the employer, do not merely repeat what is on the resume. If responding to a job posting, use it to guide you in deciding what to include, incorporate keywords from the posting that refer to skills and qualifications that the employer is seeking.

**Closing paragraph:** Summarize in a couple of sentences your relevant qualification and experiences. Thank the reader for their time and consideration of your application. Express your interest in seeking with the addressee regarding your candidacy. Include email and phone number where you could be reached.

Sincerely,

Full name



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