

Cover Letter Guidelines

A cover letter serves as an introduction to your resume, encouraging an employer to consider you as a viable candidate for a position. This one-page business letter should give a summary of your skills, experience, and background as they relate to the job for which you are applying. Always include a cover letter when sending your resume, except when you personally deliver your resume to the interviewer.

Demonstrating your knowledge of the employer while emphasizing how you can help them should be a key component of the cover letter. Be sure to relate your skills to the requirements of the job by interpreting and highlighting accomplishments stated in your resume. In the closing, be assertive and ask specifically, for an interview.

Your cover letter on average will have an 8 second attention span, so be brief and informative. Consider three recognizable parts:

- 1) opening – explain why you are writing
- 2) main body – list 2 or 3 of your major accomplishments
- 3) closing – express a desire for future communication

Be sure your letter draws a connection between the needs of the current job opening and the skills you possess.

Suggestions for an effective cover letter:

1. Keep the letter to one page.
2. Use conventional resume paper and matching envelopes.
3. Direct your letter to an individual with hiring authority. Call the potential employer if unsure who should receive your letter.
4. Tailor your letter for the specific job. Personalization is key!
5. Cover all points requested in the exact order outlined in the advertisement.
6. Have an efficient, direct opening announcing your purpose.
7. Use the main body of the letter to discuss strengths. Provide specific examples to illustrate your qualifications.
8. Show how your knowledge and skills will benefit the prospective employer.
9. Make a direct reference to your “enclosed resume” before the closing paragraph.
10. Create an “action-seeking” closing, for example: “I look forward to...”
11. Observe margins and spacing.
12. Edit your cover letter carefully. This is the first example of your communication skills a potential employer will see!
13. Re-read it from the employer’s perspective: “Why should I hire you?”
14. Remember to sign your letter.

Sample Cover Letter

Your street address
City, State, Zip Code

Date

Mr., Mrs., Ms. Employer
Title of Employer
Company
Street Address
City, State, Zip Code

Dear Employer:

1st Paragraph (Opening): State why you are writing this letter. Explain how you heard about the position. Tell why you are interested in working for the company.

2nd Paragraph (Main body): Present your strongest and most relevant qualifications. Expand on information presented in your resume. Use specific examples demonstrating what you can bring to the company.

3rd Paragraph (Closing): Keep your tone confident, and make a specific request for an interview. State you will follow-up with a phone call (Allow at least one week from the day you mail the letter). Thank the potential employer for any consideration given to your application.

Sincerely,

(Your signature)

Typed Name

Enclosures: (i.e. resume)