

**Cover Letter Overview**

**Format**

* 1 page, single spaced; 1” margins; left alignment for entire document
* 12 point font, use same font as resume (TNR, Verdana, Arial)
* Header: if sending with resume, best to use same as what is on your resume

**Purpose**

* A cover letter is a persuasive document that highlights the candidate’s skills, knowledge of the employer, and ability to contribute to the organization
* Complement and interpret your resume; avoid making your resume bullets sentences

**Best Practices for Cover Letters**

1. Tailor the Cover Letter
   1. Customize each letter for each position and/or company
   2. 2 questions to answer: Why this position? Why this company?
2. Speak their Language
   1. Use the language of: the industry, the company (check the website!), and the posting (specifically verbs from job requirements/qualifications)
3. Make Connections Between your Resume and the Posting
   1. Be direct à Based on my experience with X, I can do Y
   2. Provide specific examples if you’ve done this in the past
4. Keep a Copy
   1. If the next phase is an interview – you’ll want to refresh yourself on the document your sent
5. Proofread (then proofread again)
   1. Spelling, grammar, and punctuation are very important!
6. Address the Appropriate Person
   1. **Avoid** “To whom it may concern” or “Dear Sir or Madam”
7. Enthusiasm Sells
   1. Employers want candidates who want to work for them
8. Find Balance
   1. Stay professional and courteous, but let your personality come through
   2. Be confident and highlight qualifications
      1. Avoid “I believe” or “I hope”; consider word choice – use “ideal” versus “perfect”

**FAQS**

* When should I follow up after I submit a cover letter (and/or resume)?
  + 1-2 weeks following submission; Call/email a direct contact. If not, HR is a good choice.
* Do employers read cover letters?
  + Sometimes; Best to have a strong one submitted
* Do I always have to submit a cover letter?
  + No, only do so when asked OR if it’s optional (go the extra mile!). If a cover letter is not asked for, and you’re sending your resume via email, format the email as a mini cover letter.
* What if I am asked to identify salary requirements?
  + Base it on research for your industry AND location (cost of living); submit a range if possible

**Cover Letter Format and Breakdown**

Same header that appears on your resume.

Month XX, 20XX

*To the left is who you are addressing this letter to. If you do not have the name/title of who is hiring, start the address with the Organization Name.*

Name, *Position Title*

Organization Name

Address

City, State Zip Code

Dear *Company Name* Hiring Representative:

Your opening paragraph tells **why you are writing** and notes where you learned about the position or if someone referred you. In this paragraph you want to do four things: 1. Share what positions you are applying for 2. Where you found/heard of the position 3. Why you’re interest in the job/position 4. Why you’re interest in the company/organization. Do some research on the organization so that you can state your genuine interest in this particular employer and why it is a good fit for you, **not** how it will help you “start your career”. (3-4 sentences)

Your first middle paragraph should highlight oneexample that showcases 2-3 qualifications the organization is looking for to show the reader why she/he should consider you as a candidate. You could discuss your degree relevancy and a past example that is on your resume. This paragraph is all about **“skill fit”** and how you are qualified to do the job. Be sure to connect your experiences and/or education to the position description. By using examples, show the employer that you have the necessary experience they seek. (4-5 sentences)

The second middle paragraph is **what else about you as a candidate sets you apart from all other equally qualified candidates**. Ideas for this paragraph can include expanding on why you’re interested in working for this organization or discuss the work you would be doing in terms of the “bigger picture”. You may also think about “impact” – what is the impact you want to make and how does this opportunity connect to that. Also consider what is not represented within your resume but applicable/related to the job and/or organization. You can’t do it all – pick one of these to focus on. Remember that the reader will view your letter as an example of your writing skills. (4-5 sentences)

In your closing paragraph, **reiterate your interest in the position, thank the employer for their consideration, provide your contact information (phone number and email), and indicate the follow-up action**.If you are asked to provide salary requirements, start dates, etc., this is an appropriate place to add that additional information. (3-4 sentences)

Sincerely,

Your Name