

# Cover Letter Guidance

Your **cover letter elaborates on your resume and specifically highlights why you're the right candidate for the job**. Since you only have about 6 seconds to make an impression, get the reader's attention with a creative, attention grabbing introduction that demonstrates you've done your homework!

Show passion and excitement for the position and the company. Your cover letter must be tailored to each position and organization, and should always be included, whether it's required or not.

## HEADING

(Use same as resume with your name, phone number and email address)

Date

Employer's Name  
Title of Employer  
Company/Organization  
Street Address  
City, State, Zip Code

Dear Mr./Ms. (Last Name):

### OPENING PARAGRAPH: **WHY**

The purpose of this paragraph is to introduce yourself and grab the employer's attention. Begin by stating your reason for writing the letter and how you learned about the organization/position (specifically name the person who referred you, if any). Include specific items that demonstrate your level of interest and knowledge about the organization. Conclude this paragraph with a persuasive statement about what makes you the ideal candidate for the position (state your strongest qualifications/most relevant skills).

### MIDDLE PARAGRAPH(S): **PROOF**

The body may consist of 1-2 paragraphs that serve as your sales pitch to the employer. Use these paragraphs to elaborate on the qualifications/skills you mentioned in the first paragraph.

- **"RULE OF THREE" TIP:** Think about the **top 3 relevant skills** you bring to the role. Then think about **which experiences best demonstrates** each of those. Now, provide proof of your relevant skills using **concrete, experience-based examples** (each no more than 2 sentences in length). You should have one example each for each skill.
- Show the employer why you are an excellent candidate by emphasizing what you could contribute by addressing **specific qualifications** (listed in the job description).

### CLOSING PARAGRAPH: **THANKS**

Reiterate your interest in the position and why you are a good fit for it, thank the employer for his/her consideration, and request an opportunity to discuss your qualifications further in the future. Additionally, indicate how the employer can most easily reach you for follow-up (phone number and/or email).

Sincerely,

(4 spaces)

*Include your signature above your typed name if sending by mail*

Your First and Last name, typed

Enclosure: Resume

## COVER LETTER GUIDELINES

- Use business letter format.
- Should only be 1 page
- 13-4 paragraphs (Opening, Middle, and Closing).
- Be brief and use clear language.
- Utilize the same type of paper, font size/style, contact information as your resume.
- Address the letter to a specific person. If the hiring manager is not listed, call the human resources department to inquire. If a contact name is unavailable, use "Dear Hiring Manager" or "Dear Human Resources Director."

## COVER LETTER SUCCESS TIPS

Research the organization, its values, mission, and mirror back their message with the language you use, incorporating key words and phrases.

Review the job description and use essential key words in your letter. **This is essential if you're applying online where a computer scans for keywords.**

Talk about your interest in the employer. Also, let them know you understand their business, their challenges and that you have the skills and experience to address them.

If you are thinking of relocating and have a strong interest in a particular city, include why you would be willing to relocate.

When writing to nonprofit organizations, give examples of your volunteer work that shows your interest in service.

If adapting a prior letter for a new position, don't forget to change the date and contact information.

Proofread, proofread, proofread!

## E-MAILED COVER LETTERS

If you are asked to e-mail your application, your cover letter is the body of your e-mail, and you attach only your resume. You do not need your contact information at the top, nor the addressee's contact information. Simply begin your e-mail with "Dear Mr./Ms. (Last Name)." Be sure to reference the position number or name in the subject line of your e-mail.