
COVER LETTER GUIDELINES

Why have a cover letter?

Cover letters are an introduction and an opportunity to highlight your key accomplishments and qualifications for a job opening. They also can provide connections from the job posting to your experiences and skills. Cover letters can also show your interest in the organization and provide an example of your written communication skills. Writing a strong cover letter is the extra step that may set you apart from another candidate.

Example of a formal business cover letter:

Use the same header as your resume, you don't need your physical address

Month, Day, Year

Name of person you are writing

Title of person

Name of Organization

Street Address

City, State, Zip Code

Dear Mr./Ms.--: (*Avoid "To whom it may concern"; Dear Hiring Team could be an alternative*)

First paragraph: 1) why you are writing, including the specific position or type of work for which you are applying; 2) how you heard about the position/organization (i.e. Berry, friend, position posting); (3) why you are interested in the position/organization.

Second/third paragraph: Relate your qualifications to their needs. Choose 2-3 skills from the job description that the employer is looking for and reflect your specific experiences for each one. Name the skill, explain how you developed it and what the outcome was or expand on a related example from your resume, and then state how that will benefit the employer/position. You may want to consider using a bulleted list of accomplishments or perhaps begin each paragraph with a career headline sentence that demonstrates your value to the potential employer. You may also mention how your academic background has prepared you for the position. If you are not responding to a position announcement, try to anticipate their needs based on your knowledge of the career field and organization based on your research. Avoid reiterating your entire resume; keep this section brief and targeted.

Closing paragraph: Refer the reader to your resume if you have not already done so. Next, state your action plan – what is your next step? Offer additional opportunities to discuss qualifications (if appropriate, follow up). You may include your phone number or email (but they are also in your header) so they can easily contact you if they need further information. Thank the reader for considering your candidacy.

Sincerely,

Signature (Not needed if submitted online)

Your Name (typed)

Enclosure (if mailing resume, references, etc.)

General Tips:

- Research the organization to identify their needs and goals, then use skill words directly from the position description in your cover letter
 - Use the same font size and style as your resume (10-12 pt.)
 - You don't need to indent margins
 - Revise/target your cover letter for every position application
 - This is your first impression to the employer, so make it strong; express enthusiasm in your words
 - Focus on *what you have to offer* and *HOW* you can help the employer
 - Keep it short so employers want to read it; stay concise and specific
 - Ask a friend, professor or Career Liaison to proofread your letter
 - Be persistent to show interest, but don't come off as pesky
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COVER EMAIL

Used for online/email applications

Subject: your name, position you are applying for, name of organization

First paragraph: (1) how you heard about the position/organization (i.e. Career Center, friend, position posting); (2) why you are interested in the position/organization **This should be 1-2 sentences*

Second paragraph: Highlight specific professional experiences that make you qualified for the position for which you are applying. You may also explain how your academic background has prepared you for the position. **This should be 2-4 sentences or a bulleted list.*

Closing paragraph: Refer the reader to your resume. Thank the reader. ** This should be 1-2 sentences*

Sincerely,

Your Name

Phone Number

Email (if submitting through an application portal)

Email Tips:

- Keep the email cover letter under 150 words, be concise
- Leave line spaces between paragraphs so the email doesn't look cramped
- Avoid emoticons and color