Cover Letter Guide

The Center for Career Services & Education

What is a Cover Letter?

A cover letter is a document that allows you to introduce yourself in a personable, yet professional manner during the job application process. It's purpose is to stimulate an interest in the reader and make them want to take further action...read your resume or offer you an interview or position within their company/organization.

Why use one?

Cover letters allow you the opportunity to capture an employer's attention through your personalized writing and explanation of how their company and your qualifications can harmonize well together. Human Resource professionals state that cover letters play a major role in deciding who gets an interview and/or hired for a particular job. They also reveal that preference is given more often than not to those candidates who include one with their application.

According to a CNBC article, the ResumeLab survey of 200 hiring managers found that [more than 80% of the time] a great cover letter was enough to influence them to extend a job interview to a particular candidate with a less-than-perfect resume. Putting a little more work into creating a good cover letter can go a long way when you are applying for a job or internship.

Four Step Plan

Following this 4-step formulated plan can help you convey to the employer that you're personal and professional interests make you the right person for the job. A cover letter is about what *you* can do for the *employer*.

1. Start with an "attention getting" opening statement, such as "I am so excited to apply for this job/internship because..." and fill in the blank about the organization's overall mission, its services, or product.
2. Express enthusiasm and a genuine interest for the position with them.
3. Let it be known you've done your research about the company.
4. Indicate you want to come to work/intern there and make a professional contribution to the company.

Adapted for use from the Office of Career and Professional Development at High Point University

UNIVERSITY OF HEALTH SCIENCES & PHARMACY in St. Louis

uhsp.edu/careercenter

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Layout & Formatting

⇒ Keep to one page and single spaced

⇒ Use a common font style and size throughout (i.e., Times New Roman, Arial, 11 or 12 point size); font style should match your resume or CV

⇒ Ensure your contact information is included at the top of the document; it can mimic the same style as your resume or CV

⇒ Include your signature below the closing, above your typed name

Structural Design

Opening paragraph: this first paragraph is where you: introduce yourself, state your purpose, disclose how or from whom you learned about the position, and most importantly, ***why*** you are excited to work for this company/organization.

Second paragraph: these next few sentences should include specifics about your experiences and qualifications as to why you are the best candidate for the job.

Final paragraph: these last few sentences include a follow-up plan detailing that you look forward to their reply and welcome the opportunity to meet in person; also thank employers for their time and consideration.

** See last page for template guide*

* Talk about the company first, not yourself.
* Complement your resume information, do not duplicate it; give the factual data a more personal touch.
* Portray excitement in your words, which in turn will get them excited and grab their attention.
* You do not need a cover letter when you submit your resume at career fairs.
* Try to be specific in your letter address, and not use "To Whom It May Concern;" research your company via LinkedIn or call them to get a name and title of the hiring manager.
* Proofread your cover letter several times and have someone else proofread it too.
* Keep copies of all your cover letters to refer back to and tweak for use again if need be.
* If you modify a previous cover letter for a new job application/employer, be sure to proofread carefully to not mention the wrong company in the letter.
* *Remember*—your main objective should be to explain why you are applying for the job, **NOT** why you're qualified.

Cover Letter Template

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Copy and paste the header from your resume. Make sure your email address does not have a blue hyperlink.

Month Day, Year

Contact Name (use Mr. or Ms.; if you do not know the contact name, use Director of Human Resources or Hiring Manager)

Contact Name's Job Title (remove this line if using Director of Human Resources or Hiring Manager as contact name)

Company Name
Company Street Address
Company City, State Zip Code

Dear Mr./Ms. Contact Last Name *or* Dear Director of Human Resources *or* Hiring Manager: (put colon here)

Do not indent this paragraph. State why you are writing, the title of the position or type of work for which you are applying, and mention if you have a contact who referred you (make sure you have their permission beforehand) or if you know someone who works at the company. You may also mention how you learned about the particular position. State something that stands out to you or interests you about the organization, and why you want to work/intern with the company. State your year and major and that you feel confident that you have the qualifications to excel in the position. It is important to focus on what you can do for the company. Show them you spent some time researching them, and make connections to their core values.

Do not indent this paragraph. This paragraph is to prove why they should pick you! Pull specific duties from the job/internship description, and focus on how your abilities and strengths make you a good fit for the position. Emphasize the skills, work experience and/or education you have that relate to the internship/job. Add specific examples of accomplishments with facts/numbers when able. Be sure to do this in a confident manner—don't be afraid to brag! Remember the reader will view your letter as an example of your writing skills, so **proofread...**have someone else proofread it too. Paraphrase your resume—do not copy word-for-word.

Do not indent this paragraph. Conclude letter by thanking them for their consideration. State that you will follow up in two weeks (**if you state this, make sure you do this**). Reiterate again that you are excited about this company/opportunity, and that you would excel in this position.

Sincerely**,**

Your Signature

Your Name Typed (make sure you type your name exactly as it appears on your resume and LinkedIn profile)