



Creating a Cover Letter

Never send out a resume without a well-designed, position-specific cover letter. The purpose of this letter is to match your skills, education, and experience to the employer's needs and to express your interest in the position and the company/organization. Here are a few tips:

- As with the resume, the cover letter should be printed on high quality resume paper if you are mailing it and/or hand delivering.
- Include a cover letter even if you are e-mailing your resume to an employer.
- Always address the letter to a specific individual. Call HR to request the name of someone on the hiring committee if you can't find one online. If you are unable to find a specific name, use "Dear Hiring Manager," "Dear Committee Chair," etc. Never say, "To Whom It May Concern," as it sounds very cold and impersonal.
- It's best to have a position posting in front of you when you write the cover letter so that you can tailor your letter to the needs of the company as expressed in the posting.
- Research the employer prior to writing the letter. Tell them why you want to work for them!
- Focus the letter on what you can do for the employer. Not how the employer can benefit you.
- Be confident and positive (market yourself!), but be careful not to sound arrogant.
- Don't just regurgitate your resume. Provide *examples* of your qualifications that make you well suited for the job.
- Keep the cover letter to one page or less, and follow the paragraph structure described below.

First Paragraph: The first paragraph simply tells what position you are applying for and how you learned of the position. If you know someone at the company, or if someone referred you, be sure to mention it in your first paragraph in order to catch the reader's attention. You could also state why you are interested in the position or what attracted you to the company (to show that you have researched the company.)

Second Paragraph: This one is a little harder, but you basically want to tell the employer why they should hire you! Describe your accomplishments, previous experience, and job-specific skills. (You can use one or two paragraphs for this section.) Be selective. There's no need to restate everything that is on your resume. A good tip is to look at the qualifications listed on the position announcement, then make sure you respond to each qualification listed. You are establishing your case for an interview so indicate at least three accomplishments that fit directly with what the employer is looking for. Focus on what you can do for the company instead of what the company can do for you.

Last Paragraph: This paragraph closes the letter and does four things: 1) Summarizes why you are the ideal candidate for the position 2) Encourages action from the employer by requesting a meeting or interview at the employer's convenience. For example, "When a date and time can be arranged, I would appreciate the opportunity to discuss the position with you." 3) Invites the employer to contact you with questions (include phone number and e-mail address here); and 4) Thanks the employer for his/her time and consideration.