

# GUIDE TO COVER LETTER WRITING

A cover letter is a tailored marketing document designed to accompany your resume when applying for a position. It tells the employer why you want the position and what makes you the best candidate.

**LENGTH:** Not longer than one page. Be concise and articulate.

**FORMAT:** Use standard business letter format with the same font and margins as your resume.

It is worth some research time to find the specific contact's name.

Other possibilities if you can't find a name are Hiring Manager, Human Resources Representative, Search Committee.

Employers will view this as indicative of your communication skills. Your letter should be clear and concise. Show your best writing style, vary your sentence structure, and use good grammar and spelling.

Signed in blue or black ink for mailed letters.

**Heading Just Like your resume**  
Including your address  
email  
phone

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Today's Date

Hiring Manager's Name  
Title  
Company  
Address  
City, State

Dear Ms./Mr./Dr. Last Name:

**First Paragraph:** The first paragraph of your letter should state the position for which you are applying and how you learned of it. Include the name of a mutual contact if you have one. Express your enthusiasm for the position and/or the company. End with a brief summary of 2 or 3 reasons they should hire you.

**Middle Paragraphs:** Utilize 1 – 3 short paragraphs or use bullets. Demonstrate your knowledge of the employer and/or industry and show how it is a fit for your values, skills, experience. Give specific reasons you want to work for them.

Make strong connections between your abilities and their needs. This should be very specific to the position for which you are applying. Emphasize qualifications that best match what the position requires, giving specific examples. Elaborate on or interpret your resume; do not repeat it. Support each statement you make with a piece of evidence. Focus on what you can do for the employer, not what they can do for you.

**Closing Paragraph:** Restate your interest in and qualifications for the position. Mention your attached resume. Express interest in an interview. State how and when you will follow up (and be sure to do what you say). Encourage them to contact you if they have any questions in the meantime. Thank them for their consideration.

Sincerely,

Handwritten Name (for a mailed letter)

Typed Name

## DON'T:

- Focus only on what YOU will get out of it. Emphasize what you will bring THEM.
- Draw attention to any weaknesses.
- Rehash your resume; instead, elaborate.
- Have any errors. Proofread thoroughly.
- Use general statements (“Good communication skills,” “Great leader,” “Best candidate for the job”) without backing it up with specific examples.