



Your cover letter can be as important as your resume as you apply for job/internship opportunities. The cover letter is usually the first document a prospective employer sees. Your letter and resume should work together in presenting you in an effective and concise manner. A persuasive cover letter draws attention to the most important information in your resume.

First impressions count. Before potential employers read a word of your cover letter, they will form an impression of your organizational skills and attention to detail simply by observing its appearance.

Format Guidelines

- Your cover letter should include 3-4 short paragraphs and no longer than 1 page.
- Using the same header and font style for your cover letter and resume creates visual consistency. With the exception of header formatting, cover letter margins should be 1 inch.
- The body of the letter should be left justified (paragraph indentations are not needed).
- Try to write your letter to a specific contact. It is acceptable to call an organization to ask for the hiring contact's name and title. If you cannot obtain a name, "Dear Hiring Manager" is best.
- Don't assume the gender of your reader. Address the reader by first and last name in the salutation only if the gender of the person to whom you are writing is unclear. For example, Dear Pat Wilson:
- The majority of companies use various electronic means to accept application materials. Follow the employer's instructions. When e-mailing a resume and cover letter, attach both materials as separate PDF documents and provide a short introductory message within the e-mail.

Content Suggestions

- The first sentence within a cover letter should describe your intent. For example, "I am writing to express my interest in..." vs. "inquiring about..."
- Provide specific detail about *your* interest in an organization. Employers will learn about you based on what you highlight about them.
- Avoid overly-general statements (such as "I am impressed by your strong reputation" or "impressive growth"). Provide more detail by describing areas of growth that are particularly interesting or aspects of an organization's reputation that stand out to you.
- Show confidence in yourself and your skills and enthusiasm for the company and position, while also keeping in mind that you will be a new person within an organization that already works quite well. Considering how you will be able to "contribute" can help to avoid a boastful tone.
- Avoid numerous "I" statements.
- Tailor your cover letter to the specific position for which you are applying. Consider the needs of the organization and position to strategically provide highlights and examples from your own skills and experiences.
- Use descriptive, industry-focused language and concrete examples and facts to demonstrate the skills and experiences you will bring to an employer.
- Conclude positively and assertively. In most instances, indicating that you will contact the employer to schedule an interview is premature. However, expressing your interest in the opportunity to interview or indicating that you will contact the employer in the coming week to follow-up are positive and appropriate approaches.
- Proofread!!! Mistakes on cover letters and resumes are the number one complaint of Human Resources recruiters and can be cause to take you out of the running.