

COVER LETTER BASICS

You've found a job that you want to apply for and are ready to submit your resume. There is just one more question: DO YOU NEED A COVER LETTER? The answer is: **YES**

So....

What is a cover letter? Think of it like the handshake you give when you meet someone for the first time. The cover letter enhances your resume, just as your handshake enhances a person's impression of you the first time you meet.

- A cover letter is not a rehash of your resume, but should make an employer want to read your resume.
- Cover letters must be professional; concise, well-written, grammatically correct, and properly formatted.
- Personalize your letter to each employer by addressing the letter to a specific person whenever possible.
- Call attention to how your individual skills, knowledge and abilities fit the specific job description and company. Also, let the letter reflect your personality, motivation and enthusiasm.

How should a cover letter be formatted? Cover letters must be formatted as a business letter. Use a block format (everything lined up on the left margin). See <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/653/01/> or <http://www.dummies.com/how-to/content/how-to-format-a-business-letter.html> for formatting details. The letter should be printed on the same paper as your resume with the same letterhead. Use a font that is clear and easy to read, such as Times New Roman, Arial or Calibri in a 10-12 point size. **Limit the use of "I" statements to one or two per paragraph. This includes "I", "me" or "my".**

Parts of a Cover Letter

Salutation

- Whenever possible address the letter to a specific person, such as the department head, business owner (if it's a small business, not a large corporation), or the human resources director. If you don't know and can't find out who to address your letter to, Dear Sir, Madam, Hiring Manager or Human Resources Director is also appropriate.

Introduction – First Paragraph

- Short and sweet; maximum of three sentences!
- Tell what position you are applying for and how you learned of the opening. It's okay to mention the name of someone who suggested you apply for the position.
- It's also good to state why you are interested in the position. (Good place to personalize and show some enthusiasm!)

Body – One to two paragraphs

- This section is your "sales pitch". Show how your skills and experience fit the position and add value the company. Briefly describe how your skills, knowledge and/or previous experience relates to the required tasks and responsibilities of the new position. Another approach is to give examples of how you have successfully accomplished tasks similar to those required for the position.



Final Paragraph

- Again, short and sweet; 3-4 sentences long.
- Indicate your desire for an interview
- Tell the employer your plans for following up on your application, such as calling within a specified amount of time to ensure your application was received and answer any questions.
- Finally express your thanks to the employer for taking the time to consider your application.

Closing

- Be professional in how you sign off. “Sincerely”, or “Sincerely yours” are the most appropriate options.
 - Include your name. Leave enough room for your handwritten signature above your typewritten name.
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