



COVER LETTER TUTORIAL

When to Write a Cover Letter

Every job seeker should always send a cover letter, even if it is not asked for. A cover letter gives you an additional opportunity—an added edge over the competition—to make a positive and lasting first impression. It demonstrates your communication skills, allows you to provide evidence of why you are a good match for the position, and it shows a more natural and human glimpse of you, the job seeker, than your resume allows. Ultimately, it will be persuasive and compelling so that the reader (an employer or grad school admission counselor) wants to meet you in person.

Five Tips for Creating an Excellent Cover Letter

First:

Find the person's name to whom you are sending the letter. This can be as easy as researching the company directory online, or calling the company receptionist and asking for the spelling of the hiring manager's name. In most companies, it's typical to send the cover letter and resume to the Human Resources Director. Ask the receptionist how to address the person—with a Mr., Mx., Ms., Mrs., Dr., Miss, etc. If you simply can not find a name, then address the letter to Dear Hiring Manager: or Dear Hiring Team: Make certain to use a colon rather than a comma in business writing.

Second:

Research the organization ahead of time. You'll come across as intelligent and polite if you write a few sentences about your knowledge of the company's products, mission, services, reputation, impressive accomplishments, trends in the industry, or what you have in common. Look both at the company's website and then at Google to read press about the company from other sources. Naturally you'll want to make only positive comments and one to three sentences should be sufficient. Doing your homework about the organization and trends in its industry in advance will demonstrate you are a serious job seeker.

Third:

Provide evidence through real life examples to show the readers that you have some of the skills and qualities they seek in their candidate. It isn't very memorable to simply list what you know. Instead, it becomes quite interesting and believable when you give a real life example about a time when you used that software application, that skill, or faced this potential situation. One or two sentences for each quality they state they are seeking should paint enough of a picture to prove you possess the qualification.



Fourth:

Ask for an interview in the closing. Make it easy for them. If you are applying on a position out of state, tell them you will be visiting their city during winter or spring break or would be happy to look into video conferencing. If local, tell them you will contact them again within ten working days to see if it might be convenient to schedule a meeting. Make certain to follow through with your promise.

Fifth:

Ask a trusted adult to proofread your letter for you before you send it. Even accomplished writers need editors and proofreaders. Your word may be spelled correctly but may be the wrong word, or you might be underselling yourself, or your tense changes and makes the flow sound awkward. Your career advisor is happy to proofread your letter in person or over e-mail and to offer suggestions.

How to Send a Cover Letter

You may send a cover letter in a variety of ways.

- Mail or drop off in person: The most attractive way is in hard copy on nice resume paper. If you send it this way, make certain to sign each letter with your signature.
- E-mail: You may use the message area of an e-mail for your cover letter or you may write in that message, "Attached you'll find my cover letter and resume for the summer law enforcement internship (name the position)."
- Attachment: If you attach your cover letter, try saving it as a pdf so that the formatting stays exactly the way you intended. Some people connect their cover letter and resume into one pdf so that the employer only has to open one document. Caution here: if you are applying on more than one position, make certain to change each cover letter connected to your resume!
- Online: Look for instructions on how to upload or attach a cover letter to the online application.
- If confused: Ask the employer how they'd like to receive your documents and what their preference is for attachments. Many companies are trying to go paperless so if the instructions state to e-mail documents, then simply follow their directions.

In Conclusion-Eight Easy Reminders

- Try to find the name of the person to whom you are sending the letter or write Dear Hiring Manager or Dear Hiring Committee.
- Keep it to one page and three or four paragraphs.
- Tell them why you want to work for them by mentioning something that is appealing to you about their company, mission, products, or clients.
- Tailor each letter to the particular position and to the specific company.
- Focus on what you can do for them, not what you hope to gain.
- Provide proof that you have used some of the skills they seek by giving real life examples.
- Have someone proofread for spelling, tense, grammar, flow, and persuasiveness.
- Follow through if you've stated you will to demonstrate your motivation and interest.

Eventually, you'll become skilled at writing cover letters that inspire the reader to want to meet you. In the meantime, feel free to contact your Career Coach for help. Happy writing!