

Preparing a Cover Letter

Cover letters are a versatile means of communication that reinforces the qualifications presented in your resume and highlights how your skills and personality would be a good fit for the company. Crafting a cover letter allows for expressing your personal qualities and interests that compliments your resume.

➤ An effective cover letter:

- Has a specific purpose stated in the first paragraph
- Uses short narrative examples to demonstrate how you would be a good fit for the company
- Illustrates your personality, specific interests in the company, and positive attitude
- Features your refined skills in writing and communicating ideas

➤ 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 human glimpse of you, the job seeker, than your resume allows.

➤ 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. If you simply cannot 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.

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. 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: Proofread, Proofread, Proofread. Even accomplished writers need editors to assist with proofreading. Your career advisor is happy to work with you on proofreading your letter.

Considerations for sending cover letters

- E-mail: You may use the message area of an e-mail for your cover letter. If the application specifically asks for a cover letter, also include a draft as an attachment to the email.
- 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.
- 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.

Eight easy reminders:

- Try to find the name of the person to whom you are sending the letter.
- 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.
- Make it 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.

Top 10 Skills Most Sought After by Employers:

- Communications Skills
- Analytical/Research Skills
- Computer Literacy
- Flexibility/Adaptability
- Interpersonal Abilities
- Leadership/Management
- Multicultural Awareness
- Planning/Organizing
- Problem-Solving/ Creativity
- Teamwork

*Adapted from this great [resource](#):
R.S.Hansen et al, 2010*

With practice, 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 advisor for help. Happy writing!