

A cover letter accompanies a résumé when applying for a job used to introduce yourself to the employer and highlight your special qualifications. A cover letter is meant to compliment your résumé, but not duplicate the information. Remember that this is the employer's first impression of you; be sure to convey your communication skills and genuine interest in the position and company.

THE BASICS

- Unless it is specifically discouraged, include a cover letter with every résumé
- Use an 11-12 point professional font, preferably matching your résumé
- Limit to one page and frame document with a 1" margin
- Format like a business letter
- Print on white or ivory résumé paper and use black ink only
- Use the same header as your résumé in order to create your personal letterhead
- Enclosure lets the reader know that document (your résumé) has been included

HIGHLIGHT YOUR KNOWLEDGE OF THE COMPANY AND POSITION

- Find out information about the company and the position by using the internet and speaking with employees
- Discuss specifics about the company in order to convey your interest and address how you meet their needs
- Use O*NET (<http://online.onetcenter.org>) to research job title and identify important skills and technology and be sure to address some of this information in the cover letter

ALWAYS

- Address letter to a specific person, avoid impersonal statements like "To Whom it May Concern"
- If not listed in the job posting or if there is no job posting, contact the company's Human Resources Department, search the company's website, or use LinkedIn (<http://linkedin.com>) to find the name of the head of the department
- Be sure to find out accurate spelling and appropriate salutation (Mr., Ms., Dr., etc...)
- Focus on what you have to offer the company instead of what you hope to gain
- Write a new cover letter for every position/application

THINGS TO AVOID

- Do not simply restate what is on your résumé, focus on most relevant qualifications and expand upon them
- No spelling or grammatical errors allowed!
- Sounding demanding, conceited, or bossy will work against you

WHEN APPLYING BY EMAIL

- Save as a Microsoft Word document or a PDF with a basic title (ex...YourNameCoverLetter)
- Attach as a separate document from your résumé
- Write a brief email addressed to the person to whom you are emailing:
- Identify the position for which you are applying
- Include a sentence or two summarizing your qualifications to entice the reader to review your cover letter and résumé, without repeating either document
- Inform them of your attachments
- Give your contact information in case there is a problem opening the documents

Insert header from résumé providing your name and contact information

Date

Insert 1 line between header and date

Margins
should be set
to 1 inch

Ms./Mr. First and Last Name

Title of Person

Name of Organization

Address

City, State Zip

3 lines between date and employer's name

Insert 1 line

Dear Ms. /Mr. Last Name:

The introductory paragraph is designed to entice the reader to review the rest of the letter. The first sentence should identify the title of the position you are applying for and the name of the organization. Be sure to mention how you found out about the position and provide the names of people you have spoken to within the company. Include information about why you are interested in THIS position and THIS company, so be sure to do your research.

Insert 1 line between paragraphs

The middle paragraphs should mention your degree title (Bachelor of Science/Arts in...), your university name, location, and the month and year of your graduation. Instead of simply repeating information from your résumé, demonstrate how your prior education and experiences qualify you for this position. Use the job posting to identify the responsibilities for the position and use your prior work experience, academic projects, volunteer or extracurricular activities to showcase your skills. The key is to demonstrate how your experience and skills will benefit the company, so include some company/position specific information here.

Your final paragraph should thank the reader for their consideration and request a plan of action. If the employer has stipulated "no phone calls," request a meeting. If there are no such stipulations, it would be appropriate to indicate that you will call in a certain time frame to set an appointment to meet. If the employer is in a different city/state, give a time frame in which you will be in their area and request a meeting during this time frame. It is important to sound assertive and avoid sounding too demanding or too passive.

Sincerely,

Type Your Name

Insert 3 lines and sign your
name in black ink

Enclosure

Insert 1 line