

COVER LETTERS

The cover letter provides you with an opportunity to introduce yourself and state your objective, personalize your resume, and highlight information that addresses the needs and interests of the employer. Bear in mind that letters you write not only convey your interest and qualifications, but also give the employer an opportunity to observe your attentiveness to detail, spelling, grammar, and the overall quality of your written communication. *Flaws in your letters will often be interpreted as flaws in your qualifications.*

Address

City, ST Zip Code
Date

Name
Title
Company/Organization Name
Address
City, ST Zip Code

Dear Mr./Ms. Last Name:

Opening Paragraph:

What is your intent in writing this letter? What position are you applying for and how did you learn about it?

Briefly introduce yourself, your major, and the degree anticipated. If you are aware of a specific opening, refer to it. If you are not aware of a specific position, state your area of interest. This paragraph can also be used to refer to the individual who recommended that you contact the organization, or other factors that prompted you to write. If possible, convey why you are interested in the organization and anything you know about their product or service.

Second Paragraph:

What are your qualifications? Why do you want to work for this organization? What would you enjoy doing for them? Sell yourself and be brief. Whet the employer's appetite so that he/she will want to read your resume and schedule an interview.

Describe highlights from your background that would be of greatest interest to the organization. Focus on skills, activities, accomplishments, and past experience you can contribute to the organization and its work. If possible, demonstrate that you know something about the organization and industry/field. Use action verbs that describe relevant skills and expertise you can contribute. Mention specific knowledge you may have such as computer applications, foreign languages, lab techniques, writing and editing capabilities. You are attempting to create a match or "notion of fit" between the employer's hiring needs and your interests, experience, and skills.

Third Paragraph:

What is your plan of action? Do you want to follow up with a phone call or do you want them to contact you?

Close your letter by stating that you would like to discuss employment opportunities or other information with the individual and that you will call to follow up on your letter. This demonstrates your initiative and follow-through and will help you maintain some control of your efforts.

Other points that can be made in the last paragraph:

- Express your willingness to provide additional information
- State a specific time when you will follow up by phone or e-mail
- Let them know if and when you are going to visit their area
- Thank the person receiving your letter for their time and interest

Most importantly, remember to address the cover letter to a person. If you do not have a name, call the department or human resources to find out to whom your letter should be addressed. As a last resort, address your letter to the personnel manager, hiring manager, or recruiting representative.

- *Resumes are only as good as the letter accompanying them. So make sure that you spend some time on your letter and direct it to the appropriate person.*
- *What you write and how you write it tells potential employers a great deal about your professionalism, competence, and personality.*
- *In a job search aimed at business and professional circles, proper procedures and communication etiquette are important.*
- *A cover letter should entice an employer to want to take action on your resume. It should persuade the employer to invite you for a job interview.*