

# Cover Letter Writing Guide

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*Whenever you apply for a job, you must include your resume AND cover letter in your application. A cover letter is your opportunity to personally introduce yourself to an employer. While a resume provides detailed information about your skills and experiences, a cover letter allows you to explain to an employer why your skills and experiences qualify you for the position. Here are a few tips for writing an effective cover letter:*

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**Format:** Always use a standard business letter format, even when submitting an online application (example on back). Be sure to include your contact information, the employer's information, and if possible the name and title of the appropriate contact person. If you are unable to determine a name of the contact person, begin with "Dear Sir or Madam:" If mailing the application, be sure to print your cover letter on high quality paper that matches your resume.

**Length:** The cover letter is not a review of the resume but rather an opportunity to briefly highlight your strengths. Therefore, keep your letter pointed and direct. In the first paragraph you should introduce yourself, second paragraph review your qualifications, and third paragraph make interview request and thank the reader for their time. Employers will appreciate a well-structured letter and will likely be impressed by your effective communication skills.

**Sell Yourself:** You should not sacrifice content to adhere to a shorter length, but rather be selective about which of your qualities and experiences you want to address. A cover letter should be tailored to each individual employer and position you are applying for. What qualifies you for one position may not qualify you for another. This is your opportunity to explain how your specific experiences have directly prepared you for the position you are applying for.

**Proofread:** Before sending your letter out, carefully proofread for grammar, spelling, and content errors. Be sure the employer's name and title are correct, as well as the name and address of the organization. Have a Keystone College Career counselor review your cover letter

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*After you complete a draft of your cover letter call, email, or stop by the Career Development Center, to have it reviewed by a career counselor.*



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*Standard business letter format:*

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Your Present Address

City, State, Zip Code

Date

Ms. Employer's Name

Title

Organization

Street Address

City, State, Zip Code

Dear Ms. Employer's Name:

**1<sup>st</sup> Paragraph:** Tell why you are writing; name the position, field, or general career area about which you are asking. Explain how you heard of the opening (online job board/career fair/company employee/etc.).

**2<sup>nd</sup> Paragraph:** Mention one or two of your qualifications you believe would be of greatest interest to the organization, slanting your remarks to the reader's point of view. Explain your interest in this particularly employer, position, or location. Be sure to highlight any related experiences.

**3<sup>rd</sup> Paragraph:** Close with a request for an interview or an opportunity to speak with someone about the position. Thank the reader for his/her time and consideration of your application.

Sincerely,

*Sign Your Name*

Type Your Name

Enc. (Resume/References/application/etc).