

**CENTER FOR
VOCATION &
CAREER**

COVER LETTER GUIDE

An instructional guide to writing effective cover letters

The Cover Letter

The purpose of a cover letter is to persuade the employer to read your résumé and grant you an interview. The letter should have three recognizable parts: the opening, which explains why you are writing; the main body, which lists two or three of your major accomplishments and gives the reader a good reason to want to interview you; and the closing, which expresses a desire for future communication.

Suggestions for an effective cover letter:

1. **Always direct your letter to a specific person**, preferably an individual with hiring authority. If you do not know to whom you should write, call the company/school/agency operator for the name of the appropriate person to contact. Be sure to spell his/her name correctly and use the proper title.
2. **Tailor your letter for the specific job** and organization. DO NOT use a non-personalized form letter. Answer the question, "Why should I hire you?"
3. **Keep your cover letter to one page** of three short paragraphs.
4. When answering an advertisement, **cover all of the points requested** in the exact order outlined, since some prospective employers use those directions to test the applicant's ability to follow instructions precisely.
5. **Have several people proofread** your letter for grammar, punctuation, spelling, and typographical errors. Your letter must be neat and absolutely error-free. Realize the reader will view the cover letter as an example of your written communication skills.
6. **Use conventional business letterform** on standard size (8 1/2" x 11") bond paper that matches your résumé. Observe margins and spacing and *remember to sign your letter*.
7. **Match the font** used in your cover letter with the one used in your résumé. This should be Times New Roman or Arial.
8. **Edit your cover letter carefully**. Is it interesting and persuasive? Does it include important aspects of your college experience, your pertinent qualifications and skills, and a bit of your personality? Re-read it from the employer's perspective - does it answer the question, "Why should I hire you?"

Generic Cover Letter Template

Your Street Address
City, State, Zip Code

Date of Writing

Mr. or Ms. Employer
Title of Employer
Organization
Street Address
City, State, Zip Code

Dear Mr. or Ms. Employer:

1st Paragraph: **WHY**. Your opening should invite and entice the employer. **State why you are writing**, usually to apply for a position. If you heard about an opening through a personal reference, tell the employer about it immediately; your reference's name should be the first word of your first paragraph. If you are writing an unsolicited letter to an organization with no announced openings, be as specific as possible about the type of job you are seeking. **Tell why you are particularly interested in working for the organization**. Do some research to find out the organization's mission, recent history, services, and news and why you believe you fit with their philosophy or culture. **Do not restate the company mission, website or prospectus – they already know it!**

2nd Paragraph: **YOU**. **Present your strongest and most relevant qualifications for the job**, in decreasing order of importance. Keep the employer's perspective in mind! Succinctly expand on information presented in your résumé; do not merely repeat it. Use an example of how your listed skills/qualities tie into the company's culture or meet the job description.

3rd Paragraph: **CONTACT**. Close by making a **specific request for further contact**. Make sure your contact information (email, mobile number) is accurate. Keep your tone confident! Remind the reader that you are willing and able to be of service to the organization. Thank the employer for any consideration he/she may give to your application. It is appropriate to state that you will be calling within a short period of time to "answer any questions" they may have.

Sincerely,

(Your Handwritten Signature)

Your Typewritten Name
Enclosure: Résumé

Sample 1 - Cover Letter

Jonah Wales
1234 Brown Lane
Wheaton, IL 60187

March 8, 2012

Ms. Elizabeth Simons
Director of Human Resources
Patmos Travel Services
999 Island Way
Brownsville, IL 76543

Dear Ms. Simons:

I would like to be considered for the Marketing Intern position posted on your website. Patmos has an excellent reputation for customer service, and I am eager to be part of a team that seeks to provide a product to a customer that surpasses the customer's expectations.

I am currently a junior at Forrest University and have created all of the marketing materials for Forrest's Environmental Club for the past two years. I recently finished the marketing campaign for our year-end banquet. The event drew 200 students and community members, a 50% increase from the previous year. I have also taken Graphic Design I & II and am experienced with Microsoft Photo Editor and Publisher.

Thank you for your consideration of my qualifications. I am available to interview at your convenience and may be reached at 630-752-5047 or by email at jonah.wales@gmail.com.

Sincerely,

Jonah Wales
Enclosure: Résumé

Sample 2 - Personal Lead Cover Letter

Daniel Lyons
4321 Main St. Apt 12
Wichita, KS 12345
Daniel.Lyons@den.com

March 8, 2012

Ms. Deborah Judge
Director of Human Resources
Sailboats, Inc.
123 Water Ave.
Oceans, KS 45678

Dear Ms. Judge,

Professor Peter Rock at Gibraltar University recently informed me of your opening for the position of Sales Associate. As a Communication major who is graduating in May, I am especially interested in the presentation skills this position requires. I have been an active participant on Gibraltar University's Speech Team for two years and excel at giving informative and persuasive speeches to a wide range of audiences.

Dr. Rock mentioned the importance of Spanish fluency at Sailboats, Inc. I have studied Spanish for six years and was chosen among several of my peers to lead an after school program that teaches children Spanish. I am eager to apply my language abilities to a new position and welcome the opportunity to provide you with a written sample of my work.

I have enclosed my résumé for you to review. I am available for an interview at your convenience and may be contacted at 123-456-7890 or by e-mail at dan.lyons@den.edu. Thank you for your time and consideration of my qualifications.

Sincerely,

Daniel Lyons
Enclosure: Résumé

Sample 3 - Email Cover Letter

Dear Mr. Paul Thorne,

Please consider me for the Marketing Associate position as posted on your website. I am interested in the Damascus Company's groundbreaking work in light bulb technology and appreciate your consideration of my attached résumé.

I look forward to discussing my qualifications with you at your convenience. I may be reached at 123-456-7890.

Priscilla Aquilla
p_aquilla@yahoo.net