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Cover letters are generally 3-5 paragraphs. It may be helpful to think of them as an essay with an introduction, body, and conclusion—each building off the next to show your transferable skills and direct interest in a position/company.

Header (Name, Address, City/State Zip, Phone, Email—this should look identical to your resume header)

Date (letter sent)

Employer Address

Dear Hiring Manager, (or Selection Committee; or Mr./Ms./Dr. if last name is known)

First Paragraph: Introduction. Explain that you are writing to apply for whatever position at whatever company. You can also say how you heard about the position, if you feel it would be beneficial. The final sentence should speak to the value that you bring - and this should be based on the needs of the employer (i.e., "I believe my educational and professional background complement the direct requirements and specifications of this opportunity.") This type of value sentence will then set you up to explain and give examples of how your background complements the position.

Paragraph Two/Three/Four: Again, you should talk about your experience and provide examples that show how it transfers to the skills required of the position (i.e., highlighting your transferable skills). You should also sprinkle in aspects to show that you have researched the company and you know who they are - as opposed to just applying to the position blindly.

Final Paragraph: Tie all above paragraphs together, and invite the employer to action. (i.e., "Based on the above, and after reviewing my resume, I would welcome the chance to speak with you in the near future about this exciting position."). Thank them for their time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Your Signature

Your printed Name