

Letters – Cover Letters

Description

A cover letter is an “interview generating” communication and the purpose is to get the employer to take action on your résumé. The whole structure of your cover letter is to persuade the employer to invite you for a job interview. Since the cover letter is often the first contact with you, it must be powerful and concise. Your goal is to give your readers enough information to interest them but not enough to overwhelm them.

The cover letter indicates how well you write, how promptly you respond, and your attention or lack thereof, to details. It is imperative that a great deal of effort is made in creating your letter. Focus on your qualifications and draw attention to what you can do for the organization.

Guidelines for a good Cover Letter

- Address the employing officer by name and title
- Capture the employer’s attention by opening your letter with a strong statement
- Indicate the position for which you are applying
- State why you are interested in the position
- Demonstrate how your skills and experience will be appropriate for the position
- Include one or two specific accomplishments that are relevant to the position
- Focus on the self-interest of the employer
- Be direct in requesting an interview or state that you will call to arrange a meeting.
- Thank the person for their consideration
- Produce your cover letter and résumé on a word processor using the same printer.
- Use the same paper as your résumé or a good quality stationery
- Address the employer with correct spelling of his name
- Try to keep the letter to one page
- Use the active voice, not the passive
- Edit carefully and double check spelling and grammar
- Sign your full name legibly in black or blue ink
- Keep a copy of the letter for your records

Website Repository

For even more information, please search through our hand-picked list of websites on [The Career Center’s Website Repository](#).

Outline of a Cover Letter

Street Address
City, State Zip Code
Current Date

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

Dear Mr./Ms. Employer:

(Paragraph One) State the reason for the letter. Name the specific position or type of work for which you are applying and indicate from what resource (career development office, newspaper, personal contact, employment service, etc.) you learned of the opening.

(Paragraph Two) Indicate why you are interested in the position, the company, its products or services and what you can do for the employer. Explain how your background, education, and abilities can be of value to the organization. Mention qualifications and unique attributes that distinguish you from other candidates. Do not restate the specific items on your résumé. But indicate that additional information is given in the enclosed résumé.

(Paragraph Three) Close the letter with your expectation for a favorable response. State how and when you intend to follow up. Finish by indicating your willingness to answer any questions they may have. Be sure you have provided your telephone number and e-mail address.

Thank the reader for his/her consideration.

Sincerely,

Your Signature

Your Name (Typed)

Sample of a Cover Letter

1234 Hackberry Lane
Tuscaloosa, AL 35401
Current date

Mr. James Holland
Director
Simon Center
2245 Centerpoint Parkway
Birmingham, AL 35020

Dear Mr. Holland:

I am applying for the family counselor position listed in the June 24 edition of The Birmingham News. This August I graduate from The University of Alabama with a Bachelor's degree in Psychology. I believe my strong background in family and children's services makes me an excellent candidate for this challenging opportunity.

Through my work experience and education, I have developed the many skills necessary to be successful in this position. My major included course work in developmental psychology and growth through the aging process. Moreover, my concentration in childhood development has given me great insight into the issues affecting children today. Last summer I worked with OUTREACH, Inc., a non-profit organization whose goal is to improve parent/child relationships in families affected by alcohol/drug abuse. Through this internship, I not only improved my counseling skills, but I also gained first-hand knowledge about the administration of a not-for-profit organization. For additional information about my experience and education, please refer to the enclosed résumé.

I look forward to hearing from you so we can discuss my qualifications. In the meantime, I can be reached at (205) 555-1000. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Your Signature

Your Name (Typed)