

Rutgers School of Law Career planning Office: Cover Letter Writing Guidelines

Formatting

- Format your cover letter to reflect the standard letter format
- Use white or off-white bond letter-sized paper
- Cover letter should typically be no more than one page in length

Introduction

- Who you are and why you are writing
- Indicate the specific job you are applying for

Body

- Typically one or two paragraphs
- Tailor to reflect the qualifications required for the specific employer or position
- Explain the connection between the work of the employer and your experience
- Describe skills that you have developed and why they are essential to succeed in the position
- Give specific examples of how your accomplishments are relevant to being successful in the position
- Proofread - there must be no errors in grammar, spelling or punctuation

Conclusion

- Thank the employer for their time and restate your interest in the position.
- Request an interview, particularly if the employer is long-distance and you will be in the area at a specific time.

Closing

- Sincerely, Very truly yours or Respectfully (for a Judge)
- Individually print and sign each letter

Considerations

- Your first contact with a potential employer is through your cover letter; **it must be flawless.**
- Your cover letter is the first evidence an employer will see of your writing ability; it must use proper paragraph form and style.
- Have more than one person proofread your cover letter for grammar, spelling, and readability. Do not rely on spell-check.
- Your cover letter is a marketing tool; it must persuade the employer that you are an excellent candidate for the position
- Your cover letter should be about what you can bring to an employer, not what you hope to learn from the position.
- Don't be shy; toot your own horn! (But don't exaggerate either!)

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Date of Writing

FirstName M.I. LastName, Esq.

Title (if known)

Firm/Company/Organization/Court

Street Address

City, State, Zip Code

Dear Mr. (or Ms., or Judge, or Dr.) LastName:

First Paragraph: Tell the reader why you are writing. If you know of a specific job opening, explain how you learned about it -- give specifics, including dates, name of resource, person who referred you. Name the position, field or legal area about which you are inquiring. Discuss your reason for wanting to work in that particular area if your geographic ties are not evident from your resume

Second and Third (if necessary) Paragraphs: Discuss one or two of your strongest qualifications as they relate to the job/career area for which you are applying. Write about things you think would be of greatest interest to the employer. Tell why you are particularly interested in his/her firm, location, legal practice area. Point out any related experience, coursework or specialized training. Show how your past experiences are relevant to successful performance on this job. Give examples which demonstrate your abilities and accomplishments, as opposed to saying "I'm wonderful so hire me." Do not tell them how great this job would be for you; tell them how great you would be for this job. Make the connection between your experiences and the skills needed for the position. Do not repeat your resume -- just highlight certain relevant points and elaborate as appropriate.

Last Paragraph: Conclude the letter by indicating your interest in meeting with the employer to discuss your qualifications for the position. If you are applying to an employer outside of the area, and you will be in that area in the near future, indicate when you will be available for an interview. Restate your interest in the position and your enthusiasm about the possibility of interviewing for the position. Thank the employer for their consideration.

Sincerely,
(Respectfully, if to a judge)

Your Signature

Type Your Name

Enc.