

# COVER LETTER CHECKLIST

You have about 30 seconds to wow the reader of your letter, so you better maximize its impact by making it dynamic! When you apply for a job, the cover letter you write is just as important as your resume. Sending your resume to a company without a cover letter is like shaking someone's hand without introducing yourself. Your cover letter is your introduction. It is that segue that matches their needs with your qualifications. This is your chance to use your real voice versus resume sentence fragments to pique the interest of the reader.

## Best Practices

- Use standard business style format 8 ½" x 11" paper.
- Keep font sizes 10, 11, 12 pt. for text. Font size should be consistent throughout the letter. You should use one of the following font faces: Times New Roman, Arial, or Verdana.
- Margins should be set to 1" on all sides
- Letter should be single spaced; however, leave blank lines between the date, your contact information, the company's contact information, the greeting, each paragraph and the closing.
- Your personal data (name, address, zip code, and personal telephone number and e-mail address) should be in the margin on every page.
- Proofread the letter. Are all grammar, syntax, punctuation, and capitalization correct? Typos on a cover letter are just as damaging as if they were on your resume. If possible ask someone else to proofread it.
- No longer than one page
- Avoid rewriting/rehashing your resume in the cover letter.
- Is this an original cover letter rather than a mass produced copy. Each cover letter should be unique to every position you apply for.
- Keep a copy for your records.
- Have you used action verbs when writing your bullets or statements?
- Do not use contractions (I'd, didn't, it's).
- When including a cover letter with an email, upload the resume as an attachment or copy and paste your cover letter within the body of the email.



## First Paragraph

This is the "why I'm writing to you" paragraph which immediately tells the employer the position you want to be considered for. The first paragraph must hook the recruiter. Set yourself apart from your competition with something powerful. You can open with a restatement of what the employer is looking for and then show how you match its needs

- Example: You're looking for a trainer/facilitator with five to seven years of training experience. I've been immersed in developing training for the past 15 years.
- Identify the position you are applying for.
  - If you are applying to a job via a job board or company website, be sure to reference where you saw the posted position and include job title and reference number if there is one.
- State your value proposition – What value to you bring to their organization. By hiring you want to they get in return?
- Mention specifically how your skills and experience match the job you are applying for. Remember, you are interpreting your resume, not repeating it.
- If a friend or colleague referred you, be sure to mention this. Referred candidates frequently stand a chance of getting past the initial screening process.



<p><b>Second Paragraph (body)</b></p>	<p>This is the "why I'm qualified" paragraph. Highlight some of your most relevant experiences and qualities as they relate to the position for which you are applying for. Use specific experiences/accomplishments that support the skills sets they are looking for.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The first sentence should be a hard-hitting opener. It is a quick introduction, which is accomplishment-oriented and directed at the skills and qualifications needed for the job/industry.</li> <li>• This paragraph should provide specific examples that support your claim of being qualified.</li> <li>• List only the top three talents or characteristics that would make you stand out as a candidate.</li> <li>• Do you demonstrate your expertise by utilizing industry-specific language?</li> <li>• Be sure to stress accomplishments and achievements rather than job duties and responsibilities.</li> <li>• Don't mention details that don't apply to either the job or the company, no matter how impressive you think they may be.</li> </ul>	<p>□</p>
<p><b>Final Paragraph</b></p>	<p>The final paragraph should be only 2-4 sentences. You should refer to the enclosed resume, request an interview and let the reader know that you will contact them within specific period of time.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The third paragraph should state why you want this job. You should mention the advantages of your skill sets and what contributions you can bring to their company.</li> <li>• Does this paragraph end with a call to action, such as requesting an interview? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ You must express your confidence that you are a perfect fit for the job. You must also put the employer on notice that you plan to follow-up within a specified time. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Example: I am eager to help advance the success of your company, and I am convinced that we should arrange a time to meet. I will call your office in the next week to schedule an appointment.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> <li>• It is very important that you thank the reader for his/her time and consideration.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Closing</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Include an appropriately professional closing, such as "Sincerely"</li> <li>• Skip three lines between your closing and your typed name.</li> <li>• If you print your cover letter, sign it between your closing and your typed name.</li> </ul>	