

# Writing a Cover Letter

While you may submit the same résumé for multiple positions, cover letters are always position-specific. They are your way to describe why your experiences and abilities make you a strong candidate, and they show companies that you have taken the time to carefully consider how you will be a good fit for the job and the organization.

## Getting Started

- Read the job posting carefully. Make note of the qualifications/duties that most closely align with your experiences. It is good practice to use words and phrases from the job description in your letter.
- Research the organization. Many companies have their mission, vision and goals explicitly stated on their Web site. Reference these as you express your enthusiasm at the prospect of being part of the organization.
- If possible, contact people in your network who work with the organization or a related industry to gain a better understanding of the company/position.

## General Guidelines

- Always prepare and submit a cover letter, even when it is not requested.
- Address a specific person if possible; always address the letter to Mr./Ms./Dr. (ex: “Dear Dr. Smith”).
- Especially if you are working on multiple cover letters, be sure you are always referencing the correct organization.
- Write one paragraph of introduction, two or three paragraphs to highlight your skills as they pertain to the job description, and one paragraph to conclude.
- Write clearly and simply; avoid excessive jargon and overly complex sentences.
- Be positive in content, tone and word choice to suggest that you are an optimistic, responsible, productive, and reasonable person.
- Keep the reader’s interest by varying sentence structure and length.
- Do not use contractions.
- Proof-read carefully, and ask others to review your letter.

## Formatting Rules

- Keep your cover letter to one page, setting reasonable margins (no less than 0.6”).
- Use the same header you used on your résumé.
- Use the same font on both your cover letter and résumé. Times New Roman and Arial, sized at 10-12 point, are good standards, but anything crisp and professional will do.
- Your letter should be single-spaced, with a space between each paragraph.
- Align all paragraphs to the left of the page (no indentation).

## Submitting Your Cover Letter

- When printing, use the same quality and color of paper you used for your résumé and envelope.
- When submitting electronically, save your letter as a PDF and name it appropriately (ex: SmithCoverLetter.pdf). If possible, scan in your signature; it adds a touch of professionalism.



# Sample Cover Letter Format:

Date

Name of Addressee  
Title, Organization  
Address  
City, State, Zip

Dear Mr./Ms./Dr. (To Whom It May Concern):

## **Introduction**

- Greet the specific person with whom you are corresponding.
- State the position for which you are applying and where you heard about it.
- Name drop if you have a good connection.
- State why you believe you are a good match for the position and the organization, including 2-3 key qualifications that you will address in the rest of the letter. These qualifications should be drawn directly from the job description.

## **Body** (2-3 paragraphs)

- Focus each paragraph on the qualifications that show you are a good match for the job and organization.
- Give specific examples to prove where you got these skills and how you have used them.
- Explicitly state how your skills and experiences will benefit the company.
- Refer to your résumé, but do not repeat it.

## **Closing**

- Close with a strong reminder of why you are a good match for the job and the organization.
- Provide contact information.
- Thank the person for considering you as a candidate.
- Sign your name and print it underneath.

Sincerely,

Your Signature

Your Name