Cover Letter Content

Cover letters are concise, informative, and should pique the reader’s interest. It should complement, not duplicate your resume and focus the prospective employer’s attention to pertinent areas of experience. Your cover letter should draw connections between your experiences and those the employer is seeking, linking concrete items from your resume with broader ideas and skill areas.

From the job announcement for the position in which you are interested, identify a few of your accomplishments that are most related to the requirements of this position. Describe them in such a way that the reader can link his/her needs to your skills. Show him/her that you have solved similar problems.

**Note:** Cover letters are always addressed to a specific person and are not mass produced. If the contact person is not named in the job announcement, call and ask the name of the contact person. A cover letter should never repeat exactly what is found in your resume.

**Content:** Cover letters should be no more than one page long (3-4 paragraphs).

The first paragraph **states why you are writing**, the title or type of the position you are seeking, and where you heard about it. If possible, include the name of a networking contact--someone who knows both you and the employer.

The second paragraph **elaborates your experiences and interests**. Briefly describe your education and relatable experience and how both would make a good match with the needs of the institution or organization. This paragraph should help them understand why they should consider you as a candidate.

The third paragraph **clarifies why you wish to work in this industry, organization and position**. This paragraph shows the employer you have gone the extra mile to learn more information about them. Discuss things you have discovered which genuinely impress you. This is also the area in which to discuss how your career interests and experiences fit with their organizational philosophy.

The closing paragraph **outlines the action you will take** to follow up on your application. If the advertisement requests no phone calls, end your letter with a statement such as, “I look forward to hearing from you soon.” Include your phone number and email, and don’t forget to thank the employer for their time.

The following are suggestions to consider as you write a cover letter:

- Be clear. Have a specific purpose in mind before you begin writing.
- Use language and phrases the employer used in the job description when crafting your letter.
- Avoid beginning every sentence or paragraph with the word “I”.


- When possible, address the letter to a person and not to a position or title to avoid using “Dear Sir” or “Dear Madam.” Make your letter brief.
- Make your letters warm and personal. Avoid jargon.
- Carefully proofread for grammatical, spelling, or typing errors. Have someone else look it over. Spell check doesn't catch everything.
- Keep copies of all correspondence for easier follow-up.

**Note:** Applicants who haven’t heard from an employer after two to three weeks can follow-up by mail, phone or email. State the date you mailed your letter, restate your interest in the position and check where the employer is in the selection process. Insure your follow-up is enthusiastic and curious, and doesn’t come across in a way that may sound to an employer like, “Why haven’t I heard from you?”