

# Letters for Your Career Search

## COVER LETTERS

A resume is a document targeted toward a particular type of job, whereas a cover letter establishes personal contact with an employer and highlights your background in relation to a specific position. Cover letters bridge the gap between your resume, your experience, and your next job. They enable you to summarize your pertinent experiences or elaborate on a particular experience relevant to the job. They also allow you to request an interview.

A cover letter is always an advantage, and if you are unsure about writing one, come see one of our advisors—we can help you. A separate cover letter should be prepared for each position you are applying to. Also, never use form letters (even though subsequent letters may require similar wording); they are not professional, and won't entice potential employers into reading further.

Too many job seekers spend a lot of time on their resumes and little or no time on writing appropriate letters. On average, a resume is reviewed for less than one minute. A well-written cover letter often dictates whether your resume is carefully reviewed or quickly scanned. You have a brief amount of space to tell prospective employers as much about you and your qualifications as possible. Do not waste this opportunity by sending a form letter that is carelessly written.

A cover letter should emphasize what makes you a strong candidate for the position and entice the potential employer to read on. Before you compose your letter, make a list of the top ten skills needed to be effective in this position. This is where the job announcement and your general knowledge of the industry will apply. Next, prioritize this list and narrow it to three or four skills that you can demonstrate through your background, education and experience.

- Print each letter individually on good quality paper.
- Pay attention to spacing of letter from margins—avoid chunks of empty space.
- Use a business correspondence format as shown in the examples that follow.
- Include your name, complete address and telephone number on the face of the letter.
- Date the letter.
- Put the addressee's name and title, company name and complete address on the face of the letter exactly the way you put them on the envelope.
- Sign the letter.

# Cover Letter Format and Content Description

Return Address  
City, State, ZIP  
Telephone with area code

Date

Ms./Mr. Employer, Director  
ABC Corporation  
1000 Main Street  
Anywhere, USA 00000

Dear Ms./Mr. \_\_\_\_\_:

**FIRST SECTION:** State why you are writing, name the position or type of work for which you are applying, and mention how you heard of the position or the organization. Consider a bit of creativity in your opening paragraph to hook the reader. Is there information about the company or at least the industry you could mention—maybe an article you have read? Avoid starting every paragraph with the word “I.” End the first paragraph by clearly stating the skills you possess which best qualify you for the position.

**SECOND SECTION:** Explain why you are interested in working for this employer and specify your reasons for desiring this type of work. If you have had experience, be sure to point out your particular achievements or other qualifications in this field or type of work. Refer the reader to the attached resume without simply restating its content. This is your chance to expand upon your experience and qualifications.

**THIRD SECTION:** Mention attachments. Have an appropriate closing to pave the way for the interview by asking for an appointment, giving your phone number, or by offering some similar suggestion to facilitate an immediate and favorable reply. Also, indicate how you can be contacted. You want the employer to take some action.

Sincerely,

An appropriate close has four spaces between sincerely and your **typed** name.  
(Do not forget to sign your letter in the space above your typed name.)

Sign your name here

Type your name here

Enclosure (refers to your resume)