

Cover Letter Essentials

A cover letter is a 1-page document meant to accompany a resume. It is a formal letter to your potential employer that is intended to explain how your previous professional experience has prepared you for the role you are applying for, as well as how your values align with those of the company. Additionally, it is an opportunity for you to express your excitement about the position and the possibility of interviewing for it.

Components of a Cover Letter

A cover letter contains six components: a header, greeting, opening, body, closing, and signature.

Header: your name, address, and contact information, followed by the date and then the employer’s name, address, and contact information

Greeting: a formal greeting such as “Dear Ms. Smith:”

Opening: initial paragraph that states the position you are applying for and forecasts your major qualifications (e.g. education, years of experience, certifications, etcetera)

Body: two paragraphs that draw attention to specific work experiences and go on to explain how those work experiences prepared you for the position you are applying to

Closing: final paragraph that does the following: reiterates applicant’s qualities and excitement for the position, expresses gratitude for the employer’s time, and requests the opportunity for an interview

Signature: end with an appropriate signature statement (e.g. “sincerely,” “with gratitude”) and your name

Resume vs. Cover Letter

Resume	Cover Letter
Summarizes all of your qualifications	Elaborates on qualifications most relevant to the position
Lists duties in bullet points of short phrases	Uses complete sentences and paragraphs
Unique layout and formatting	Formatted and organized as a letter addressed to employer

Additional Information

Be careful to avoid repeating the same information provided in your resume when writing your cover letter. Rather than providing the same information across both documents, the cover letter should expand on the qualifications in your resume that you feel are most relevant to the job. For example, if your resume states that you recruited twelve new clients for your former employer, your cover letter should explain how you accomplished that, as well as how that experience would be relevant to the role you are applying for.

Lastly, your cover letter should clearly communicate to the reader that you are knowledgeable and enthusiastic about the company and position you are applying to. Consequently, it is important that you research the role and company prior to writing the letter. You can do this by visiting the company website and reading more about the target role. Your reader should never get the impression that you are using a generic cover letter.