

COVER LETTERS

A cover letter is a well-written document that accompanies a resume designed to highlight your previous experiences, academic background, and skills as they relate to the position you are applying for. Your cover letter should not reiterate your resume, but should tell a story expanding upon your qualified skills. A cover letter should explain why you are interested in working for the organization and what value you will add. The focus of a cover letter should address the employer's needs rather than your own needs. Employers also often use a cover letter to assess your writing skills.

When writing a Cover Letter:

- Review the position description and tailor your letter to the position/industry. The reader should feel like you wrote this cover letter just for this specific position. Limit your use of the pronoun "I"
- Address your cover letter to "Dear Hiring Manager" if you do not know the individual's name, or include a specific name if you identify the individual hiring for the role.
- Focus on how your background and skills match the position requirements rather than on why you want the position/what you believe you will gain from working at the organization in that role
- Use positive language and keep the focus on what you can do. Illustrate in your letter how you believe the organization's goals and values align with your own.
- Use a business letter format; follow the same format guidelines as your resume (i.e., single-spaced, font size between 10-12, margins between .5"-1")
- If you are emailing your cover letter, attach your letter as a PDF or Microsoft Word document instead of pasting it into the body of the email.
- Use spell check. Make sure to read the letter out loud after you have finished writing to check for grammatical errors, and consider asking someone else to read your letter to ensure you have not missed any other errors

Structure of a Cover Letter:

Your Name

Your Address (Street, City, State, Zip Code)

Date

Name of Hiring Manager (if you do not know the name of the hiring manager, highlight the organization's name and address (City, State Zip Code))

Dear Mr./Ms. Last Name: (or Dear Hiring Manager if you do not know the name)

First Paragraph:

State your purpose immediately by naming the exact position you are applying for and specifying how you discovered the opening, including the name of anyone who referred you. Briefly summarize your academic background and years of relevant industry experience to establish why you are an ideal candidate right away. Conclude the opening by referencing a specific project, product, or core initiative of the company to demonstrate genuine knowledge of their work and industry.

Middle Paragraph(s)

Use one to two middle paragraphs to showcase two to three key experiences and academic achievements that directly align with the job description. Clearly identify each experience by name—whether an internship, part-time job, student organization, or volunteer role—and detail your specific responsibilities using strong action verbs. Focus exclusively on the expertise and skills relevant to the target role, emphasizing tangible accomplishments like improved metrics, streamlined workflows, or successful projects. Conclude each highlight by explicitly explaining how these achievements demonstrate your readiness to succeed in the responsibilities of the new position.

Final Paragraph:

Conclude your letter with a direct, confident statement that reiterates your interest in the role and your core qualifications. Express genuine appreciation for the employer's time and consideration, explicitly stating that you look forward to discussing your background in an interview. Include a clear follow-up plan by specifying when and how you intend to reach out regarding your application status. Close with a formal sign-off, such as "Sincerely" or "Best Regards", leave three blank lines below it for a signature, and type your full name.