

Cover Letter Guide

Guidelines:

- Find out the name and title of the person to whom you are writing and be sure you have the correct spelling
- Use your own style
- Be concise, one page is maximum
- Use simple language, no flowery phrases
- Show your distinctiveness and fit for the job/organization
- Triple check all grammar, punctuation, and spelling
- Use active voice only
- Use the same paper and font for your cover letter as you did for your resume
- Be sure to sign your cover letter
- Put “Enclosed: resume” at the very end of your cover letter

Questions to answer:

PARAGRAPH 1: Why are you writing? How did you get the employer’s name? Where did you find their job listing? Who referred you? What position are you applying for?

[This is a critical introductory paragraph. Do not tell the reader too much at first, just the essential reasons why you are writing. TIP: Try to grab their attention in a positive way and set an upbeat tone.]

PARAGRAPH 2: Why are you qualified for the position you are applying for? What have you done that applies to this job/position? Why should the reader look at your enclosed resume?

[This paragraph is essentially a brief distillation of the most salient parts of your resume relative to the requirements of this position. TIP: Highlight those critical parts of your background, as evidence on your resume that address the core parts of the job description.]

PARAGRAPH 3: Why are you further interested in this position or motivated for this position? Why are you interested in this particular job? Why do you want to work in this organization? What is special about you that should be considered for this position? What sort of fit is there between your experience and this job/organization?

[Continue to highlight selective and appropriate parts of your resume or mention your reasons and motivations for applying. TIP: Use this paragraph to validate additional core skills of your background and experience and why this position excites you.]

PARAGRAPH 4: Restate your interest in the opportunity and an interview. Thank the employer for their time and consideration.

[TIP: Always end your letter positively and pro-actively. Remember: the cover letter exists as a means to entice your reader to review your resume; your resume exists as a means to entice your reader to meet with you during an interview.]

Special Technique:

Try this easy technique: Just put the job description your desk on one side and your resume on the other. Envision the cover letter as a bridge between the two documents. When you review the job description underline or highlight the critical parts of it reflected in your resume. Then when you write the cover letter, relate and filter one to the other through the four paragraphs as described above.

TIP: Have friends read your cover letter without having seen the job description. They should be able to reconstruct in their mind the critical parts of the position and your resume.

Cover Letter Format

Your Street Address
City, State, Zip
Current Date *[5 returns]*

Name of person you are writing to
Title or Position
Department
Company
Street Address
City, State, Zip *[3 returns]*

Dear Dr./Mr./Ms. Last Name: *[3 returns]*

Paragraphs 1-4:

Introductory Information: the basics.

Why Them? Engage your reader.

Why You? Sell yourself.

What's next? Close with enthusiasm. *[3 returns]*

Sincerely, *[6 returns]*

(Sign your name here)

Your typed name *[3 returns]*

Enclosed: resume