

Guide to Cover Letter Writing

(HPU Career Resources)

Writing your cover letter in a job search is a challenging but critical step. It is NOT just a formality in the process. Like your résumé, the cover letter is an essential marketing tool that plays an important part in your job search strategy. A cover letter is a tailored and specific professional memo which will tell the reader why you want to work for their company, and serves as an introduction to your potential employer.

What is an effective Cover Letter?

An effective cover letter is personalized and will entice your potential employer to read your résumé. A new cover letter should be created for each position and company. Create a positive impact by conducting research on your “audience,” which will enable employers to view your written communication skills – a very important skill in the job market.

What should you know before writing a Cover Letter?

- Generic (and impersonal) cover letters don't work. Be sure that your cover letter reflects what is appropriate for your audience, objectives, and the job requirements. It should be able to quickly tell the employer:
- Why you are applying
 - What skills, experiences, or education you have that relate to their needs
 - How the company will benefit from hiring you
 - Why you've chosen this particular company

Cover Letter Details

- Research the company and position you are applying for.
- Find out who to address the cover letter to – it MUST be addressed to a specific individual, with his or her correct title and business address.
- Make the content of your letter powerful. It must convince the employer to interview you.
- Drop a name – if you have a contact at the company, with permission, mention him or her in your letter.
- Your Cover Letter should be designed to be work-centered and employer-centered, NOT self-centered.

- Avoid flattery and DO NOT state the obvious (“Queen’s Medical Center provides care for the ill.”)
- Be honest, and be able to back up your claims with evidence and specific examples from your education or experience.
- Keep it brief – it should be no longer than one page.
- Be positive and forthright – avoid negatives (“Although I cannot...”, or “Unfortunately...”)
- Avoid beginning too many sentences with “I”.

- Your grammar, spelling and punctuation MUST be accurate – have others proofread it for you.
- You MUST sign your cover letter:
 - Hard Copy – Sign the original document.
 - Soft Copy – Scan your signature and insert it where you would sign, OR print a hard copy, sign it, and scan the entire document with your signature on it.

Sending your Cover Letter

- Via post mail – send it in an envelope that will not require you to fold your document(s).
- Via e-mail or online – save it as a PDF version and submit or upload your cover letter.

The Most Important Detail

PROOFREAD! Your cover letter should be free of typos or grammatical errors. Your cover letter is a professional writing sample of what you will produce for the company.

GENERAL OUTLINE FOR A COVER LETTER

Applicant's Street Address
City, State Zip Code

↓
↓
Date of Letter (Month, day, 20__)

↓
↓
Employer's Name
Title
Department
Company Name
Company Street Address
City, State Zip Code

↓
Dear Mr./Mrs./Ms./Dr.

↓
● **Opening Paragraph:** State why you are writing, name the position or type of work for which you are applying, and mention how you heard about the job opening or the company. Underline titles of newspapers or professional journals. Mention a contact person at the organization if appropriate.

Opening Paragraph:

- Who you are
- What you are seeking
- Why you are writing
- When and where you learned about the position

Middle Paragraph(s):

More info on YOU:

- Skills
- Interests
- Abilities
- Etc.

Personalized:

- Why this company?
- Why will you be a good fit?

● **Middle Paragraph(s):** Explain why you are interested in working for this particular employer and specify your reasons for seeking this type of employment. Outline your strongest qualifications that match the position requirements. As much as possible, provide evidence of your related experience and accomplishments, but do not repeat exactly what is on your résumé. Convince the employer that you have the personal qualities and motivation to perform well in the position. Be personable and enthusiastic. Make the employer want to read your résumé. If you are not available for immediate employment, say so. (“I will graduate in May 2010, and will be available for full-time employment as of June 2010.”)

Closing Paragraph:

- Thank you
- ASK for the interview
- Provide your contact info

● **Closing Paragraph(s):** You may refer the reader to your enclosed résumé which gives a summary of your qualifications. Have an appropriate closing to pave the way for the interview by indicating the action or steps you will take to initiate an interview date. Include a current telephone number where you can be contacted. Express appreciation to the reader for his or her time and consideration.

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↓
Sincerely,

Your Written Signature (Don't forget to sign!)

Your name as it will be signed

Note:

Format should have at least 1" margin all around.

Enclosure (This means that you have additional attached documents – your résumé)