

# Cover Letter Writing

## Purpose

An effective cover letter has two main goals: to demonstrate your understanding of the company (or organization) and address how you can meet their needs. The cover letter should not be a simple reiteration of what has already been stated in your resume and each letter needs to be customized for a particular company and/or position.

## Length

Cover letters should be no more than one page.

## Style

- Sentences should be succinct and clear. Be direct, and stay away from clichés.
- Keep paragraphs short; ideally only 5 or 6 sentences. Break up longer paragraphs into smaller sections.
- Choose words that are professional and formal, and refrain from using slang or informal phrases.

## Layout & Content

Cover letters generally follow a basic formula that includes an opening, two/three paragraphs of description, and a closing. The following table outlines the sections of a cover letter and what information should be include in each.

Section	Information to Include
<b>Address</b>	Standard business address of the organization to which you are applying
<b>Salutation</b>	Address letter to a specific person, not "To Whom It May Concern." If the job posting does not include a name, research the organization to find a name or contact the organization directly to inquire. The organization's website is a good place to start. If you still cannot find a name, address the letter to the title of person who will be looking at your application, such as "Dear Hiring Manager."
<b>First Paragraph</b>	Use this paragraph to introduce yourself and express your interest in the position. Possible approaches include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Specify how you learned about the job/internship. If applicable, refer to the name of someone you met in the organization or who encouraged you to apply</li> <li>• Indicate why you are interested in the organization or position</li> </ul>
<b>Second/Third Paragraph</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focus on how your qualifications and experiences match the desired qualifications of the position</li> <li>• Describe specific, measurable accomplishments and the skills you used to achieve them</li> <li>• Offer the employer reasons why you are an ideal candidate</li> </ul>
<b>Closing Paragraph</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Summarize your interest in the position</li> <li>• Thank the reader for considering your application</li> </ul>
<b>Signature</b>	Use "Sincerely" or "Respectfully," and skip four spaces underneath and type your name. When you print out your letter, sign in blue or black ink in the space.