



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
Address	Standard business address of the organization to which you are applying
Salutation	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.”
First Paragraph	Use this paragraph to introduce yourself and express your interest in the position. Possible approaches include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 • Indicate why you are interested in the organization or position
Second/Third Paragraph	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus on how your qualifications and experiences match the desired qualifications of the position • Describe specific, measurable accomplishments and the skills you used to achieve them • Offer the employer reasons why you are an ideal candidate
Closing Paragraph	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Summarize your interest in the position • Thank the reader for considering your application
Signature	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.