



Cover Letters

The goal of a cover letter is to provide a formal introduction to the employer that describes how your skills and abilities fit what they are looking for in a good candidate. A cover letter is an expanded objective statement from a résumé and always precedes your résumé.

- Research the company and position beforehand. The more you know about what you are applying for, the easier it will be to identify how you can be a benefit.
- Make your letter interesting and encourage the employer to read your résumé.
- Be enthusiastic and show your interest.
- Cover letters should be written for each position you apply for. Generic cover letters don't always do the trick and it is obvious to the employer.

Benefits of Writing a Cover Letter

- Résumés are brief, bulleted and non-personal. Using the first person tense in a cover letter personalizes it for the employer.
- A cover letter makes your application packet more professional and clearly identifies your goals and how your skills can be utilized by working for them.
- Not every applicant will have a cover letter, so this will make you stand out.

Types of Cover Letters

There are 2 common types of cover letters to write depending on your situation.

Job Application Letter

Job application letters are written when you are applying for a specific job opening. The goal of this letter is to obtain an interview. It is very direct and refers to how you meet the job qualifications. Research the company beforehand to know exactly what they are looking so you can make yourself stand out even more.

General Inquiry

This type of letter is written when there is not a current opening but you are interested in the possibility of one. You may not obtain a job interview, but hopefully an informational interview to do some formal networking and get your foot in the door. The structure is very similar to a job application letter, but is more general.

Style and Format of a Cover Letter

- Your letter should be written in a professional business correspondence format.
- The letter should be on the same paper and have the same heading as your résumé and reference sheet.
- Cover letters are typically one page.
- Main sections of a cover letter:
 - Your heading / contact information
 - Date



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- Employer contact and address
 - Salutation "Dear Ms. Johnson:" or "Dear Human Resources" if you don't have a specific contact
 - Text (3-4 paragraphs)
 - Close with "Regards", "Sincerely", etc.
 - Signature
 - Typed name
 - Enclosure (indicates your resume follows)
- Your cover letter can be more effective when you address it to a specific person. Using "To Whom It May Concern" doesn't do much good. Call the company and ask if you don't have a contact person. Use a title if you absolutely cannot come up with a contact name, for example: "Hiring Manager" or "Human Resources Office".
 - Try to avoid the redundancy of starting too many sentences with "I".
 - In some cases, you will be sending an email instead of a letter. All of the rules still apply.

Other Common Correspondences

Thank You Letter. Thank you letters are written to an employer after an interview or job offer. The majority of interviewees don't write letters so yours will stand out. They can be helpful after an interview because it reminds them of who you are, highlights skills again, shows your interest, or clarifies something you said in the interview.

Rejection or Decline Letter. You may decide to decline a job offer and it should be done in a professional way. Mention that after strong consideration, you have decided not to accept the position. Don't forget to thank them for the opportunity and consideration.

Withdrawal Letter. A withdrawal letter is appropriate if you need to withdraw your application from a pool. You will also leave a better impression with the employer if you notify them prior to them offering you the position. Offer your thanks for their consideration and note that you have accepted another offer.



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EXAMPLE:

Jordan Smith

111 Apple Lane
Bellingham, WA 98225
123.456.7890
jsmith@email.com

August 20, 2007

[1 space]

Name of Contact Person

Title or Department

Company Name

Mailing Address

City, State ZIP

[1 space]

Dear Ms. Rebecca Johnson:

[1 space]

Opening Paragraph: Catch the reader's attention. State why you are writing to them and the position you are interested in. Mention how you heard about the opportunity. For example, "My instructor at Bellingham Technical College, Peter Robinson, recommended I apply for this position" or "I heard about your position through the Career Services department at Bellingham Technical College".

[1 space]

Middle Paragraph(s): Highlight your skills that match the qualifications of the position or company. Explain how you obtained those skills and abilities (education, employment, internships, projects, etc.). Make it very clear to the employer what you can do for them and how your career goals fit.

[1 space]

Closing Paragraph: Reiterate your interest and encourage them to check out your résumé that follows. Show your interest in meeting with them and provide a next step. It is also helpful to indicate the best way to contact you.

[1 space]

Best Regards,

[3 spaces]

Signature

Your Name Typed

[1 space]

Enclosure - Résumé