

What is a cover letter?

A cover letter introduces you to an employer and informs them on why you are applying for a particular position. It also highlights your special accomplishments and skills that will most benefit the organization. A top notch cover letter “sells” you and your resume. The main point of a cover letter is to tie your experience directly to the job description. Look at the description and be sure the words relate directly to those in your cover letter and resume. A good cover letter helps you to land an interview.

Who writes a cover letter?

A cover letter should be written by anyone seeking employment, both part-time and full-time. Many applicants have difficulty writing a cover letter and/or choose not to include a cover letter. Writing a cover letter shows skill and initiative on your part, and should be included unless specified by an employer.

How long should a cover letter be?

The length of a cover letter should be no more than one page, single spaced, with spaces in between paragraphs.

Cover Letter Tips

Send the letter to the appropriate person. Your letter will be more effective when you address the letter to a specific person within an organization. Don't hesitate to call the organization directly to find out the name (and correct spelling!) and title. If you are unable to get a specific name, “Dear Hiring Manager” or “Dear Selection Committee” are acceptable alternatives, but avoid generic greeting like “Dear Sir/Madam” or “To Whom It May Concern.” Always follow directions of job posting for best address or email to send letter.

Leave qualifiers out of your letter. Don't use the expressions “I feel that...” or “I think that...” These qualifiers only weaken what comes after them. Usually, these statements can be left out and the remaining sentence can stand as is.

Count the “I's” in your letter. Don't overuse the word “I”. If you use the word “I” more than 3 or 4 times to start your sentences, you've used it too much. Change sentences so that the word “I” is eliminated. For example, “I have had experience in...” could be changed to “My experience includes...”

Always use proper formatting. Be sure to use an acceptable business letter format (see sample). Appropriate format applies to both email (attachment or body of email) and hard copy. Be sure to save a copy for your records of each letter.

Match your stationery. If you are going to use hard copies instead of email (always follow job posting directions for best method), print your resume and cover letter on matching stationery and enclose them in a matching envelope. Avoid using colored paper and graphics. Stay conservative.

Reread your letter. Keep in mind that the professional image you want to give to a prospective employer includes a neatly typed, grammatically correct and accurate letter and resume (NO TYPOS!). Don't be satisfied with the computer spelling and grammar check on your computer. The best way to check for mistakes is to have others (a career adviser) read and view it before sending it to employers.

REMEMBER, your cover letter and resume represent YOU, so make it leave the best impression.

See back for a sampled cover letter template.

Cover Letter Template

Heading/Personal Data: the heading for your cover letter should be the same as the one used on your resume, unless you are sending your cover letter in the body of an email—in this case, type your information in a block format.

Razor Shark

3301 College Avenue Apt. 1A • Davie, FL 33314 • (954) 262-7201 • career@nova.edu

OR

Razor Shark
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Davie, FL 33314
(954) 262-7201
career@nova.edu

Date

Name of Contact
Title
Name of Organization
Address
City, State, Zip Code

Dear _____,

(Introduction)

State the position or type of work for which you are applying for. Identify how you heard of the position. Briefly (in one to two sentences) explain why it interests you and a short summary of who you are. For example: "Please accept the attached resume for the position of _____. I became aware of the position through your _____ (posting). I believe that my past experiences as a(n) _____ along with _____ make me an excellent candidate for the position.

(Body paragraph: Sell yourself!)

This section can be either 1 or 2 paragraphs. Research the company and industry beforehand. Try to avoid use of bullet points in a cover letter and fluffy, generic statements such as "people skills" and "team player" without backing them up with concrete examples.

Expand on why you're qualified for the position with tangible examples that relate directly to the position you're applying for. You may want to take the top 3-5 skills from the job description to draw a connection between the needs of the current job opening and the skills you can bring to the job. You should use this section to complement your resume.

(Closing)

Bring your letter full circle. Reemphasize your interest, politely thank the employer for their time. You may use statements such as, "I would love to talk further with you." "I look forward to hearing from you." "Thank you for taking the time to review my application."

Sincerely,

Sign your name here

Your name (typed)

Enclosure OR Attachment: Resume (This word will depend on the method of delivery.)