

# WRITING COVER LETTERS

A cover letter is a business letter submitted with your resume or job application. It is your chance to introduce yourself to a prospective employer, communicate your interest in a specific position and organization, and explain how you are a well-qualified candidate for the internship or job.

# Cover Letter Guide

## The Three Steps to Creating a Cover Letter

Step 1:

### EXAMINE THE JOB DESCRIPTION

What are the most important job requirements?  
Note any words or responsibilities that are repeated or emphasized, and highlight them.

Look for these labels:

- Core responsibilities
- Required or minimum qualifications
- Preferred qualifications or characteristics

Step 2:

### SELECT WHICH JOB RESPONSIBILITIES YOU WANT TO FOCUS ON

Step 3:

### MATCH YOUR SKILLS, EXPERIENCES, AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS TO THOSE RESPONSIBILITIES

How do cover letters for internships differ from cover letters for entry-level positions?

#### Internship:

Communicate the mutual benefit for both you and the organization.

How will you add value to their team?

Explain how the internship will help you develop as a professional.

#### Entry-level position:

The emphasis here is why you are well-qualified for the position.

Explain how your experiences and courses have prepared you to be an effective and outstanding professional at their company.

How do you write a cover letter if you do not have relevant experience?

**Transferable skills!** In other words, write about your professional skills that you take with you from job to job like teamwork, communication, work ethic, problem solving, and leadership.

# Cover Letter Format

**Length:** one single page or 200-400 words

**Font size:** use 10-12 point font size

**Margins:** 1”

**Color:** black text unless you're applying to a creative industry

**Font:** appropriate fonts are Arial, Calibri, Garamond, Georgia, Tahoma, Times New Roman

**Paragraphs:** 3-5 paragraphs

## Cover Letter Key Sections

**Header:** Includes your name and contact information. Use a professional email address.

**Date:** *i.e. March 19, 2018*

**Company Address:** Includes employer's name and title, company name, street address, city, state, zip code.

**Salutation:** Dear Mr./Mrs./Ms. employer's name, or hiring manager's name; or Dear Search Committee. Do not use To Whom It May Concern or Dear Sir or Madam. You can call Human Resources and ask who the hiring manager or chair of the search committee will be.

**Introductory paragraph:** State the reason for the cover letter, what position you are applying for, how you heard about the opening, and why you think you would be a good match.

**Body:** Build a connection between your background and the employer's needs. Use the job description and highlight the specific education, job experience, and skills they are seeking. Explain how you are a great fit. Use a brief example. You may list your achievements in bulleted form.

**Closing:** Express your interest in working for the organization and that you would welcome an interview. Indicate dates and times you are available.

Sincerely,

Signature  
Your typed name

# Cover Letter Do's and Don'ts

## DO:

- Infuse your personality!
- Address the right person.
- Use your networking connections.
- Expand on the most relevant information in your resume.
- Showcase the results of your work. Be specific!
- Keep it brief.
- Use correct grammar.
- Ask someone to proofread your cover letter.
- Follow the employer's instructions.
- Keep copies of your letters.

## DON'T:

- Rely on spellcheck to catch all errors.
- Repeat exactly what is in your resume.
- Begin too many sentences with "I."
- Exceed one page.
- Share irrelevant information.
- Forget to sign your letters.
- Highlight lack of experience or weaknesses.
- Use a passive voice.