



THE COVER LETTER

The job market is very competitive, with many applicants competing for the same job opening(s). A cover letter is an important employment application document that should accompany your resume. In many cases your cover letter is the first thing potential employers see. If it is not interesting, concise and error-free, it will be the last thing they see; they won't even bother glancing at your resume. The cover letter allows you to personalize your application documents in response to advertisements or to inquire about possible positions within a company. It allows you the opportunity to make a good first impression, express your personality, demonstrate your communication skills and organizational ability, and express enthusiasm for the company and the position offered.

A cover letter should be brief (generally kept to one page), highlight your qualifications, and draw attention to specific points in your resume. While resumes can only tell employers what you have done, cover letters allow for more elaboration and detail such as why you became involved in particular activities, what you gained from the experience(s), and why the employer should consider you for the position. A well-written cover letter commands the reader's attention and creates interest in you and your resume. Cover letters should be tailored to each specific company and position for which you are applying. It is best practice to find out who is responsible for hiring and directing the letter to this individual. If this is not possible, address the letter to the Human Resource Specialist, Human Resource Manager or Recruiter.

GENERAL GUIDELINES:

- Use paragraph form when writing your cover letter (bullet points may be used)
- Use a conversational, professional tone
- Demonstrate interest in the company and why you should be considered for the position
- Use terminology specific to your field of study
- Use appropriate grammar with no spelling or typing errors
- Individualize your cover letter making sure it sounds like you and not copied
- Communicate ambition and accentuate accomplishments
- Limit your cover letter to one page, writing short brief paragraphs
- Use a basic 12-point font such as New Times Roman or Arial for a more professional appearance
- Address the letter to a particular person by name rather than "To Whom It May Concern"
- Research company prior to sending your resume and cover letter
- Verify correct spelling of names and other details
- Don't overuse the word "I" and avoid starting every sentence with "I"
- Never include negative information about yourself or previous employers
- Use active rather than passive verbs
- Answer the question: "Why should I see you?" Let the employer know why they should consider you for the position and not someone else.

COVER LETTER FORMAT

When writing a cover letter it is important to be clear and specific and make your point(s) concisely. Employers do NOT have the time to read every word. All you need to write is three paragraphs. Your cover letter should be NO more than one page in length.

Opening Paragraph (explain why you are writing):

- In response to an ad or someone who referred you
- Use your knowledge of the company
- Explain why you want to work for the company and/or why the job interests you
- Be sure to grab the reader's attention

Skills/Qualifications Summary (explain why you are qualified)

- When responding to a job posting, match your top skills with what the company is looking for in their job posting
- Keep your cover letter brief and easy to skim
- Use 3-5 bullet points identifying your qualifications

Closing Paragraph (say thank you and explain your next steps)

- Thank them for considering your resume and reiterate your interest in the position
- Let the company know you will be calling them to follow-up within a determined amount of time

ALWAYS FOLLOW INSTRUCTIONS! If the posting requests samples of work or other information, address this in your cover letter.

How to Address Your Letter

- Take the time to find the name of the person who is in charge of hiring for the position you are applying for
- Use LinkedIn to research the hiring manager's name
- If you are unable to find the name of the hiring manager, then consider using "Dear Human Resource Manager"

How to Submit Your Cover Letter

ALWAYS follow the instructions about how to apply for the position in the job posting.

Email

Do NOT submit your cover letter in the body of an email. Be sure to include it with your resume as one attachment. **Do NOT** make the reader open up two separate attachments. In your email, clearly state that your cover letter and resume are attached.

SAMPLE COVER LETTER

First/Last Name

Telephone Number

Email Address

LinkedIn (if applicable)

Date

Name, Job Title

Company Name

Street Address

City, State, Zip

Re: Independent Sales Representative

Dear Name:

I recently spoke with (name of individual – first and last name), who recommended I share my interest and qualifications for the Independent Sales Representative position available at (insert name of organization). This is precisely the type of position I am looking for, as it will allow me to utilize many of my (creative, lead generation, etc.) skills, yet more importantly, (include another compelling reason you want to work for this company).

Please allow me to summarize the key qualifications that present me as an ideal candidate:

- Over 10 years of experience (sales roles in business to business sales of services, entrepreneurial spirit and varied roles fact to face strategies, etc.)
- State something about your reputation for being pleasantly persistent.
- Include how you take initiative, are a self-starter, and typically operate without much oversight or operate as an advisor and advocate for small business.

Attached you will find my resume which further outlines my competencies and passion for the Independent Sales Representative position. I look forward to following up with you on (month/day/year) to see where you are in the review process and what the next steps will be.

Thank you for your consideration and time.

Sincerely,

First Name/Last Name