

# COVER LETTER WRITING

## *Best practices in writing an effective cover letter:*

### **Address the Recruiter**

Start your letter with the date. Skip two lines and write the recruiter's full name, preceded by Mr. or Ms. Then, list the recruiter's title and the company name and address. If you don't know the recruiter's name, simply list the company name and address.

### **Appropriate Greeting**

Two lines below the header, greet the recruiter with "Dear Mr." or "Ms.", followed by his/her last name and a colon. Don't use the first name, even if you've met the recruiter before; it's unprofessional to be immediately informal. If you don't know the recruiter's name, address the letter, "To Whom It May Concern."

### **Introduce Yourself**

No, not by typing "Hello, my name is..." State your letter's purpose in the first paragraph. Tell the recruiter which position you're applying for and why it interests you. Briefly list your top qualifications. If you're responding to a job posting, mention where you saw it.

### **Connect with the Reader**

The second paragraph is the most important: It's your sell. Summarize your credentials, but don't reiterate your resume. List your most relevant accomplishments from previous jobs, internships or volunteer work. Emphasize your qualifications for the job by highlighting applicable skills. If you're responding to an ad, you have an edge: You already know the job requirements. Make sure you address them.

You should also clarify why you want to work at this particular company. Explain why you and the company are a good fit. Show the recruiter that you've done your research. Mention a recent company event or express your interest in an aspect of the company that isn't widely known. Remember, everyone loves flattery, but don't go over the top.

### **Your Plan for Follow-Up**

Your final paragraph should be only a few sentences. Thank the recruiter for reading your letter, then request an interview and provide your phone number. Or, be proactive and state that you'll call in a week to follow-up. Then do it.

### **Wrap It Up**

Two lines below the last paragraph, conclude with "Sincerely,". Three lines below that, type your full name. Don't forget your signature.

### **The Quick List**

- Do not send generic cover letters! **Tailor each letter** to the company, department and, if possible, specific position. The extra effort pays off.
- Recruiters read hundreds of cover letters. Brevity is key. **Keep the letter to one page.**
- When touting your achievements, be confident but **don't exaggerate**, brag or lie.
- **Read, edit and re-read** your letter for typos. Ask a friend to read it, too.

A cover letter's strength lies in its language and detail, so do your research and take your time. Use a professional tone, but don't be stiff. Be yourself. Take advantage of this opportunity to show off your dynamic personality as well as your skills.