

COVER LETTERS

A cover letter is a document that introduces yourself to employers, states why you are applying to a specific position, and elaborates on your skills and experiences that make you qualified for the particular job. The cover letter is your opportunity to explain how you will add value to the organization as well as express a bit of your personality.

What should a cover letter do?

- Show how strong your communication is by serving as a writing sample
- Show your level of interest in the company and position
- Help you discuss personality traits and skills that are not apparent from your resume
- Create interest in reading your resume and get you an interview
- Provide another means of self-expression or “branding”
- Your resume will show if you are qualified for the position; your cover letter will help the reviewer determine if you are a good fit

Basic Guidelines

Cover letter should accompany your resume when being sent to an employer. Some job posting may not require cover letters, but we recommend you send it even when it is not requested.

Every cover letter you write should be tailored to the specific position you’re applying for to describe how your experience and skills match the qualifications of the position and how you will fit with the employer’s values and expectations. It’s incredibly important to do research on the employer and read the position description carefully.

The cover letter is one of the first contacts you have with the employer, so the tone of your letter should reflect the kind of impression you want to make. Avoid using casual phrases you might use in a text to a friend. Additionally, you will want your cover letter to be proofread with no spelling or grammatically errors.

Structure of a Cover Letter

Heading

First, you will list your contact information as it is formatted on your resume.

Next, leave some open space, then write the date you are sending the cover letter. The date should appear on the upper left side of your letter.

Leave a few more lines of space and put the employer’s contact information to the left side. Here you will include the name of the employer’s contact person and their position title (if available), the employer’s name, and the employer’s address.

Last, you'll identify and address the letter to the hiring manager. If you cannot find the person's name, addressing the letter to "Dear Hiring Manager" or "To Whom It May Concern" is okay.

Opening

The beginning of your cover letter should catch the employer's interest and make them want to read more about you. If you are applying for a specific position, state it in your opening paragraph. You can mention how you heard about the position or if you were referred by someone connected to the organization. You should explain your interest in the organization and what you know about them as well as accomplishments that relate directly to the open position.

Middle

State why you are uniquely qualified and how you will perform this job. Site your strongest qualifications that match the position requirements as well as your specific skills and experiences that highlight your interests, abilities, and personal qualities. Your letter should not cover word for word what is on your resume, but rather introduce or sum up your resume and enhance it.

Closing

Restate your interest in the position and/or employer and perhaps include why this organization's mission is important to you or what excites you about this opportunity. Then always thank the employer and show a desire for communication, whether through requesting an interview or stating you look forward to hearing from them soon.

Signature

Sign your letter using sincerely and leave three to four lines of space before typing your name. If you are sending your cover through the mail (very rare these days but it is possible) you will want to hand sign your name in this space. The space will remain on the letter even if you are digitally sending the letter.

Final Considerations

- Make sure your cover letter is no longer than one page.
- Proofread for correct grammar and spelling.
- Vary your sentence structure and do not begin every sentence with "I".
- Show enthusiasm and passion for the employer and the position.

**Want additional help or for someone to look over your cover letter?
Make an appointment with a Strommen Center Career Coach or Peer
Advisor on Handshake!**