



# COVER LETTERS: Getting started

**THE GOAL OF A COVER LETTER** is to bridge the facts and experiences on your resume with the position for which you are applying. A strong cover letter should tell the employer *why you are interested in the opportunity (or organization)* and *how you meet the qualifications they are seeking*. A cover letter is not meant to repeat what can be seen on your resume, but rather to *supplement your resume* by sharing information and detail about what you can offer to an employer. It is also an example of your writing abilities.

## Structuring your letter

A **COVER LETTER SHOULD BE** no longer than one page. Though the exact number of paragraphs may vary, you should certainly include an opening and closing paragraph, in addition to your body content. You should use business professional format, with your contact information, the date, and the employer's address in the header.

### BUSINESS PROFESSIONAL HEADER FORMAT

Applicant's contact info Line 1  
Applicant's contact info Line 2

Date

Employer's Name, position title  
Company name  
Company address Line 1  
Company address Line 2

## Determining content for your letter

An **OPENING PARAGRAPH** should clearly state the position you are applying for. It is not necessary to give your name, major, or degree in the opening sentence. The employer can see this information from your resume. Instead, jump right in by indicating your **purpose for writing**, your **interest in the position or company**, and a statement explaining your **qualifications**.

The **BODY PARAGRAPHS** are where you should go into detail about your qualifications. Again, do not repeat what is already visible on your resume. Instead, tell them *why* an experience on your resume was significant and its connection to this job or to a qualification the employer indicated in the job description.

Emphasize what you offer to the employer (not what the employer can do for you). You might include stories or examples of your job related skills, specialized training, course work, class projects, or accomplishments from your education, experiences or activities.

A **CLOSING PARAGRAPH** does not need to be long. You may want to include a summarizing statement of your qualifications and interest. Thank the employer and indicate your interest in speaking with them further in an interview. If desired, include information about how you prefer to be contacted.

### ADDITIONAL COVER LETTER TIPS

- > A letter should be tailored for each job (no generic form letters!)
- > Address letters using an individual's name. If no name is given, use "Hiring Manager" or "Recruiter"
- > Write the letter in your own words. Use a conversational style and avoid lengthy, academic sentences.

# BUILD YOUR COVER LETTER

This is an opportunity for you to outline the content you want to include in your cover letter. Use this space for notes and ideas, to get a big picture written down, before you write the full letter on your own computer.

## Header with your name and contact info from your resume

**Today's date:**

**Recruiter name:**

**Recruiter position title:**

**Company name:**

**Company address line 1:**

**Company address line 2:**

**Salutation:** Dear \_\_\_\_\_:

**Opening paragraph:** *What are you applying for? Why are you interested in this opportunity? If you know or spoke to someone at this organization, include that evidence of networking. Why do you think you are a good fit with the position and the qualifications the employer is seeking?*

**Body paragraphs:** *Expand on your qualifications. Highlight examples and indicate stories when you have demonstrated these qualities. Tell them how the experiences you are highlighting are relevant to the position.*

**Closing paragraph:** *Reiterate your interest in the specific company and position. Include a closing summary statement about your fit and interest in the position. Close with a request for action (interview) and a thank you for the consideration.*

**Sign off:**

**Name:**

Business professional format with a header containing your contact information (*may be same header as on your resume*), date, and company information

A cover letter should always be **specific** to a job or company. Address the **core qualifications** you have identified through careful study of the job description. It is usually not possible to address every single quality listed in the job description.