

How to Write a Cover letter

The most common question we receive regarding cover letters is whether or not one needs to be included with a resume. Sometimes an employer will request or require one as part of the application process, but what about those that do not, or those that list it is optional?

Let us give you the most simple and direct answer: **YES** – always include a cover letter with your resume.

What is the purpose of a cover letter?

The cover letter is a first impression or introduction of who you are and what you offer an organization. Because it is a less formal document than a resume, it allows you to weave in a bit of your personality or personal touches while highlighting skills that will be of value to an employer.

A cover letter is a complement to your resume, giving you the space to address areas such as why you are looking for a new position or why you are interested in a particular company. These are not pieces of information that belong on a resume and can be the differentiator between your resume going in the “no” stack and going in the “yes” stack. Take the opportunity to share this information with your potential employer.

Tips for writing a cover letter

A competitive advantage you can create is communicating to recruiters that you are talking directly to them and are not just blasting out resumes. Here’s how you can use the cover letter to show your genuine interest in the company and put yourself in a more favorable position.

- If you have a personal connection with an organization or their product, mention it! For example, if you’re applying to a cosmetics company and you use their products, this is a tidbit you should include.
- Address your letter to a specific person. Take the time to research the name of the hiring manager or HR Director and address your cover letter accordingly.
- Don’t repeat anything that is also on your resume – a cover letter is designed to complement your resume, not reiterate it. Use the opportunity to explicitly state how your experience would benefit their specific organization.
- Keep your letter concise and to the point, longer is not better. Pick at least three (but no more than five) key points that communicate how hiring you would benefit their specific company.

How to format your cover letter

A successful cover letter not only requires solid content, it also must have a strong visual appeal to the reader's eye. The formatting of the letter gives it that that

- **Length:** No more than one page. Ever.
- **Font:** Between 10 and 12-point depending on the font type you select. It should match the font size and type that is used on the resume.
- **Margins:** 1-inch margins. Create a balance of white space and text all around the document. Don't let the text and margins appear lopsided.
- **Heading:** Use the same heading format on both your cover letter and resume.
- **Paper:** If you are sending an actual document, use heavier card stock and match exactly the paper you use for your resume.

Cover Letter Sample:

Introduction

State your reason for contacting the organization (i.e. the position you are seeking and the department, how you learned about the available job, and why you are interested in this particular position.) This is also a good spot to include any personal connection with the organization or their product.

Main Content

What are your qualifications for this position? What special training, traits, or accomplishments can you bring to this employer that make you stand out or be competitive with other applicants? Highlight details such as totals, quantities, percentages, and any other measurable information. This section may be narrative, focused on your best candidate qualities and the value you will add to the organization.

- It is OK to use bullet points as part of the main content to highlight key accomplishments.
- Bullet points draw the reader's eye to this area, so be clear and concise with what you are communicating in this section.

Closing

Thank the employer for their time and consideration. Express a desire to arrange an interview and let them know how you will follow up and how you can best be reached.