Cover Letters

Cover letters are the employer's first impression of you as a potential candidate; therefore it is quite important to spend time on this document. This letter allows you to express skills and characteristics that you cannot express in your resume. Cover letters provide an avenue for you to discuss your technical and transferrable skills illustrated by solid examples. Follow the standard cover letter outline on the next page to assist you with your first draft.

You must sound confident in your letter, emphasizing your positive qualities and how you will be an excellent fit for the position.

Here a few tips to consider when writing your cover letter:

• Write to a specific person, using his or her name and title. Never send a cover letter addressed “Dear Sir or Madam” or “To whom it may concern.” Usually you can get a specific name by calling the organization or looking in a business directory. If possible, address your letter to the “decision maker” (the person for whom you would be working), not the Human Resources Department.

• Demonstrate your knowledge of the organization. Do some research on the company and briefly express what you know about the company.

• Target your skills and experiences. Present any relevant background that may be of interest to the person you are writing to. The “selling” paragraph highlights specific results achieved by you in those areas known to be important to successful job performance.

• When appropriate, use the specific vocabulary of the industry. Every field has its own terminology (avoid overuse).

• Avoid frequent use of personal pronouns such as “I,” “me,” “my,” and “mine”; especially at the beginning of paragraphs. Vary your sentence structure by beginning sentences with prepositional phrases, connectors, and subordinate clauses.

• Define your next step. Don’t close your letter without clearly defining what you’ll do next.

• Include a statement expressing your appreciation for the employer’s consideration of your employment candidacy.

• Proofread your typed letter and have someone else proofread it.

• Keep a copy for your file. After the application deadline passes, you will want to contact the employer about the status of your application.
COVER LETTER OUTLINE

Your Name
Street Address
City, State ZIP
Month Day, Year

Employer Name
Title
Company
Street Address
City, State ZIP

Dear Mr./Ms.____________:

First paragraph (Purpose)
State why you are writing and the type of position or field of work in which you are interested. Indicate how you learned of this position. If there is not a specific position available, indicate how your interest originated. Demonstrate briefly your knowledge of the company.

Second paragraph (Background/Qualifications) Goal: Match your skills to employer's needs.
Refer the employer to an enclosed resume. If you have had related experience or specialized training, elaborate on the details that would be of special interest to the employer. Be as specific as you can about your qualifications and skills. Provide examples on how you obtained/honed these skills. Explain how you would fit into the position and the organization. This paragraph can get lengthy. You can break it into two paragraphs to make it more readable.

Third paragraph (Request for Action)
Close your letter by briefly restating how your qualifications match the position. Express your interest in further discussing your background and the position with the employer. Write when you will be contacting them to ensure your application materials were received. Finally, include a statement expressing your appreciation for the employer's consideration.

Sincerely,

(Signature)

Name