Cover Letter Tips
Your Guide To Getting your Dream Job
Created by Ruth Slagle, MLIS
Sample Cover Letter

Key Elements of Successful Cover Letters

Jane Doe
Graceville, FL 32440

September 5, 2018

Dr. Joe Smith
Academic Dean
Everyone’s University
123 University Street
Main Street, USA 12345

Dear Dr. Smith:

**Introduction:** This is your introduction paragraph in which you indicate the reason you are writing this letter, the specific position or type of work for which you are applying and how you learned of the opening (career center, name of publication or website, friend, employment service). Additionally, you may choose to state your educational background in this section. You may also consider adding one or two sentences about the organization’s mission and/or values and how those relate to your personal values or background.

**Body:** (One or two paragraphs) In this section, you will emphasize what you can do for the employer. It is important to explain how your academic background makes you a qualified candidate for the position. If you have had some practical work experience, point out the specific achievements or unique qualifications. Do not just state the skills that you have but give concrete examples of how you possess those qualities or skills. Try not to repeat the same information the reader will find in your resume. You may want to highlight any special leadership experiences or language skills in this section. As much as possible tie your qualifications to the employer’s needs, particularly those expressed in the job description.

**Conclusion:** In the closing paragraph, indicate your desire for a personal interview. Refer the reader to the enclosed resume or application, which summarizes your qualifications, training and experience. Repeat your contact information and offer any assistance that will help to promote a speedy response. For example, say you will be in the city where the organization is located on a certain date and would like the opportunity to speak with them. Or, ask if the company will be recruiting in your area.

Sincerely,

(Your neatly handwritten signature here) if non-electronic

Your name typed
Writing Your Cover Letter

1. **The “Get Attention” Paragraph**
   This is where you capture the attention of the reader. Give the name of the position you are applying for (and perhaps indicate how you learned of the vacancy - did someone tell you about it? Who? Did you see an ad? Where?)

   Most importantly, you should give an outline of the specific reasons you feel you are ideal for this job in this company. Do not wait until paragraph two to begin selling yourself: start doing it here. Rather than saying “my skills and experience make me qualified for this position,” specify which skills and which experiences. **Specifics are always more compelling than generalities.**

2. **The “Creating Desire” Paragraph(s):**
   Here you go into detail, depicting yourself as a serious candidate and one worth of inviting for an interview. It is generally a good idea to give the hard details about yourself (specific skills, history or responsibility, success, etc.) above “softer” details like personality traits, attitude, and value. Think hard about ways you can reinforce an image of yourself that includes as many of the desired qualities as possible.

   • **It is important that you not only tell the employer that you have a skill, but show them how this skill is reflected in your experiences.** Don’t just say you are “detail oriented,” give the reader an example of something in your history that proves it; rather than claiming to be “motivated,” make the reader believe you are drawing on a real experience. Show, don’t tell. Remember, you are trying to set yourself apart from other applicants; anyone can claim to be ‘hard working,’ but only a truly hard-working person can prove it.

   • **Do not simply regurgitate the contents of your resume.** You should certainly refer to it, but do so with a view to expanding on relevant ideas.

   • **Wherever possible, emphasize how you will benefit the company.** If you write too much about how you will benefit from being hired (“I hope to learn a great deal about the industry”) then you will be calling attention to the gaps in your experience and knowledge.

   • **Do what you can to demonstrate that you are well rounded.** If every point you make about yourself is drawn from your educational background, the reader might think of you as narrowly focused; if possible draw on experiences from a variety of settings.

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Your address
City, State Zip Code

Today’s Date

Name of Addressee
Title
Organization Name
Address
City, State Zip Code

Dear Mr., Ms., Dr. Smith:

[Blank]

[Blank]

Sincerely,

Your Name

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3. **The “Call to Action” Paragraph:**
   Normally just a few lines in length, this is where you express your strong interest in the position and your desire to discuss your application further in an interview. You might also consider giving a brief summary here of the key points in the letter above, but avoid simple repetition for its own sake.