What is a Cover Letter?

Before you start writing a cover letter, you should familiarize yourself with the document’s purpose. A cover letter is a document sent with your resume to provide additional information on your skills and experience.

The letter provides detailed information on why you are qualified for the job you are applying for. Don’t simply repeat what’s on your resume -- rather, include specific information on why you’re a strong match for the employer’s job requirements.  Think of your cover letter as a sales pitch that will market your credentials and help you get the interview. As such, you want to make sure your [cover letter makes the best impression](https://www.thebalance.com/get-your-cover-letter-noticed-2060153) on the person who is reviewing it.

A cover letter typically accompanies each resume you send out. Employers use cover letters as a way to [screen applicants for available jobs](https://www.thebalance.com/how-does-an-employer-decide-who-to-hire-2062876) and to determine which candidates they would like to interview. If an employer requires a cover letter, it will be listed [in the job posting](https://www.thebalance.com/job-listing-guidelines-2061395). Even if the company doesn’t ask for one, [you may want to include one anyway](https://www.thebalance.com/should-you-include-a-cover-letter-if-it-s-not-required-2060291).