

COVER LETTER GUIDE

HOW TO BUILD A PROFESSIONAL COVER LETTER

WHAT IS A COVER LETTER?

A cover letter is a one-page document submitted along with your resume or CV for a job application. Cover letters consist of a short overview of your professional experience, skills, and education that are most relevant to the job posting.

WHY COVER LETTERS ARE NECESSARY

Cover letters provide candidates the opportunity to introduce themselves to the recruiter or hiring manager and showcase the specific skills and qualifications they possess that align with the job description. The purpose of a cover letter is to convince the recruiter or hiring manager to read your resume and consider your application for the position.

DO I NEED A COVER LETTER?

You should *always* include a cover letter when submitting a resume or CV. The only time you should *not* submit a cover letter is if the online job application specifically states a cover letter is not necessary or does not allow for submitting a cover letter online.

IMPORTANT TAKEAWAYS BEFORE GETTING STARTED

CUSTOMIZE	Create a new cover letter and modify it for each individual job you are applying for.
KEYWORDS	Use keywords found in the 'Requirements' and 'Qualifications' sections of the job description when describing the skills gained from your professional experience.
PROOFREAD	Check for spelling errors, proper grammar, and field-specific terminology.
PEER REVIEW	Reach out to colleagues in your field and other professional contacts to request they read your cover letter to identify errors and suggest changes.
IMAGINATIVE	Think outside of the box; start your cover letter with something interesting and thoughtful that will catch the reader's eye and help them remember you.
CULTURE	As you write, keep in mind the culture of the company you are applying for and who will be reading your cover letter.

BASIC COMPONENTS OF A COVER LETTER

Header: Your header should be in the same style as the header on your resume or curriculum vitae (CV) and include your full name as it appears on your resume or CV and LinkedIn profile, mobile phone number with the country code if applying to an international position or company, professional email address (firstname.lastname@gmail.com), and LinkedIn profile web address.

Date: The full date, including month, day, and year, you plan to *submit* your resume and cover letter.

Company Contact Information: The recruiter or hiring manager's name and title, company's name, department or program name if provided, and physical address.

Greeting: A professional, formal greeting to the recruiter or hiring manager, or a general greeting to the director, employer, or hiring committee.

Introduction: 2-3 sentences that state the position you are applying for, how you became aware of the job listing, and the name and title of a current employee who referred you to the position if available.

Body: 1-2 paragraphs that detail specifically why you are a good fit for the position, as well as the company overall. Remember, the longer the cover letter, the less likely the recruiter or hiring manager is to read the entire letter and move on to your resume.

Closing Paragraph: 2-3 sentences in which you thank the recruiter or hiring manager for taking the time to consider your application for the position, express your interest in meeting with them in person to discuss your qualifications further, and the best phone number or email address for them to contact you.

Salutation: A professional end to your cover letter with your full name (as it appears on your header) written below.

RESOURCES FOR COVER LETTER EXAMPLES

'Cover Letter Samples' – University of Virginia

<https://career.virginia.edu/resumes/writing-cover-letter/cover-letter-sample>

'Free Cover Letter Examples and Writing Tips' – Alison Doyle with The Balance Career

<https://www.thebalancecareers.com/free-cover-letter-examples-and-writing-tips-2060208>

'Cover Letter Samples' – Youth Central

<https://www.youthcentral.vic.gov.au/jobs-and-careers/applying-for-a-job/what-is-a-cover-letter/sample-cover-letters>

'Writing Cover Letters' – University of Wisconsin-Madison

<https://writing.wisc.edu/handbook/assignments/coverletters/>

'9 Attention-Grabbing Cover Letters' – Caroline Gray with Glassdoor

<https://www.glassdoor.com/blog/9-attention-grabbing-cover-letter-examples/>

HOW TO BUILD A COVER LETTER

1. Begin by opening a new Microsoft Word document and adding the same exact header used on your resume or CV for consistency of style. The two documents should look like they belong together.
2. Before writing the content of your cover letter, make sure your Microsoft Word document has the same margins, font style, and font size as your resume.
3. Two spaces below the header, write out the full date for when you plan to *submit* your resume and cover letter (for example: January 1, 2019). If you do not finish your cover letter the same day it is created, be sure to revise the date when you are ready to submit your application.
4. Two spaces below the date, write the recruiter or hiring manager's name, company's name, department or group if applicable, and physical address. The company's address is typically found at the bottom of the company's website, or on the contact page. If you do not know the name of the recruiter or hiring manager, there are a couple ways you can find it: email or call the company directly and ask for the name of the Human Resources (HR) representative who is hiring for the specific position, search the company's website for HR employees, use LinkedIn to locate the profile for the HR hiring manager for the company, or use a search engine.
5. Two spaces below the company's contact information, write a formal greeting to the recruiter or hiring manager: Dear Mr./Ms./Dr. etc. Last name. If you cannot find the name of the employee responsible for reviewing your application, use a general greeting: Dear (Position) Hiring Committee, Director of (Department), Dear Employer, etc.
6. The introduction paragraph should be short, 2-3 sentences, and state what position you are applying for and how you found the job listing. Be sure to use the exact position title as it is listed in the job posting and include the specific job reference number if provided. Many larger companies have several open positions at one time, so it is important to include the reference number. If an internal colleague referred you to the position, include their name and title within the company. Recruiters and hiring managers read the same introductions over and over, so think about how you can set your cover letter apart from other candidates.
7. The body of your cover letter should be no more than 1-2 paragraphs and should specifically discuss the skills, experience, and education you possess that match the requirements and qualifications of the job posting. It is important *not* to reiterate what you have already stated in your resume. Think of your cover letter as a chance to explain what you were not able to in your resume. Specifically point out how you will add value to their company. Show you have done your research on the company and the

specific position by referencing a previous or current project. Do not be afraid to let your passion and personality show through in your writing.

8. The Conclusion of your cover letter should be no more than 2-3 sentences that express your appreciation for the recruiter or hiring manager taking the time to consider your application, interest in meeting in-person to discuss your qualifications further, and the best phone number or email address to contact you.
9. Two spaces below the conclusion paragraph, end your cover letter with a formal salutation, your signature if possible, and type your name as it appears on your header.
10. Now that you have finished writing your cover letter, edit and refine. The cover letter is the first competency test the company will use to evaluate your professional written communication skills and attention to detail.

ChatGPT Questions for Cover Letters

- ✓ Write a cover letter for this job. Below is the job description and my resume/CV.

RESOURCES ON COVER LETTERS

‘Do I Need a Cover Letter? Are Cover Letters Necessary in 2019?’ – Bart Turczynsky with Zety

<https://zety.com/blog/are-cover-letters-necessary>

‘How to Write a Cover Letter’ – Michael Tomaszewsky with Zety

<https://zety.com/blog/how-to-write-a-cover-letter>

‘How to Show Your Personality in a Cover Letter’ – Alison Doyle with The Balance Career

<https://www.thebalancecareers.com/how-to-show-your-personality-in-a-cover-letter-4174695>

‘If a Job Doesn’t Ask for a Cover Letter, Should I Send One Anyway?’ – Vicki Salemi with Monster

<https://www.monster.com/career-advice/article/cover-letter-job-ad-ask-vicki-quora-0617>

‘Tricky Cover Letter Mistakes to Avoid’ – Kim Isaacs with Monster

<https://www.monster.com/career-advice/article/cover-letter-mistakes-0417>

‘How to Write a Cover Letter’ – Amy Gallo with Harvard Business Review

<https://hbr.org/2014/02/how-to-write-a-cover-letter>