

Create Your Cover Letter

Estimated time needed: 30 minutes

Welcome to the hands-on lab for Create Your Cover Letter. In this lab, you will go through the steps of creating a basic cover letter. This letter will contain the common sections and building blocks for a good cover letter, and you can edit it later to include specifics about a particular job you want to apply for.

Learning Objectives

After completing this lab, you will be able to:

- Create a basic cover letter
- Describe how to edit the letter to fit different job applications

Prerequisites

You will need the following to complete the exercises in this lab:

- Word processing software
- A source of information about your past work experience (a resume might be useful)
- An example job listing to practice tailoring the letter to a specific role

Keep in mind

- You will probably want to keep a copy of your letter in Microsoft Word (.doc) format, since it's the format companies will ask for more than others. It's also useful to save the letter in plain text, because that will make it easier to cut and paste into a website field.
- You can do this lab with pen and paper, but it will be easier to keep and edit your text in electronic form. That way, you can consider it like a template.
- You can use your example job listing to fill in the information for your example letter about title, qualifications, contact person, and so on. You will edit the letter when you use it to tailor it to a new job listing.
- As you work, highlight the parts of your letter that are likely to change, such as the job title. This will make it easier to find and change them in the future.

Exercise 1: Begin your letter

In this exercise, you will open and start your letter.

1. Open a new document in your word processor.
2. Select an opening for your letter and type it in. For example:

Dear (manager):

In this case, (manager) is a placeholder; when you write your real cover letter, you can replace it with the name of the contact for the specific job.

Exercise 2: Write your first paragraph

In this exercise, you will write the first paragraph of your letter.

1. In the first paragraph, state the title of the job to which you're applying and why you feel you might be a good fit. It's also sometimes useful to mention where you saw the job listed or who referred you. It can also be very effective if you can express why you are enthusiastic about the company.

I was excited when my colleague Janna Navarro told me your company had an opening for a Data Analyst. I have admired the products developed by Torotoni Software for many years, and I would be very interested in joining your team.

2. End the paragraph with a brief sentence introducing yourself. This forms a transition to the next paragraph, where you'll expand on it.

I am a data analyst with 3 years of professional experience and skills that match your needs, and I think I would be a strong candidate.

Exercise 3: Write the main body of the letter

In this exercise, you will compose the main part of your letter.

In this section, you should build a case for your strengths as a candidate.

- Cite a few examples from your experience that match the skills mentioned in the job listing.
- Draw parallels between the listing and your resume and portfolio. Quantify your experiences when possible.
- Keep your text brief and focused. Pick some best examples and save some of your work to discuss further when you interview.

In my most recent role, I maintained and extended a mission-critical database and prepared a weekly report of changes and trends for stakeholders. I also worked with the coding and management teams to improve functionality of the database by 45%, advised on compliance issues, and supervised the work of two interns. I know SQL and Python, have intermediate proficiency in Hadoop and Apache Spark, and have used Tableau software for visualization.

Exercise 4: Close your letter

In this exercise, you will close your letter.

Keep this simple. Essentially, you should:

- Restate your interest and your hope to meet with them further.
- End with a call to action.
- Choose a polite closing and sign with your full name.

Thank you for your consideration. I would love to bring my skills to Torotoni Software, and I'm eager to discuss the contributions I can make to your team. Please call me at your earliest convenience.
Best regards,
Olivia Torvald

Tips

- Be sure to have a friend proofread your letter before you use it. You want to make the best impression, and some employers may even remove you from consideration if your letter is full of mistakes.
- You can use the text you created in this lab for any cover letter, whether you send it by email, print it and send it by post, or paste it into a website application. Of course, if you plan to send your cover letter by post, you should format it correctly as a business letter. Consult an outside source to see how to properly add your address, the business address where you are applying, and business letter formatting.
- If you have a cloud storage space like Google Docs or Dropbox, save your cover letter there so that you can always find it easily using any device.

Conclusion

Good work! You have created a basic cover letter. Now you can use your letter to edit and submit with your future job applications.

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