



## Checkpoint 3

# The art of the cover letter

At the end of this checkpoint, you will:

- Understand what makes an effective cover letter.
- Create the first draft of your cover letter.
- Submit your cover letter to our profile developer.

Outline

## Overview

A cover letter is meant to do two main things: First, it should direct the hiring manager's attention to what makes you a great candidate for the role. Second, it should show a little personality and excitement for the role. By the time you finish this checkpoint, you should understand the purpose of a cover letter and the best practices for writing cover letters.

Your resume is limited to your past experiences, work duties, and any projects you have completed. It represents what you have done and

what you could handle, relating to your aptitude for the job. A cover letter gives you an opportunity to express your interests, passions, and expertise, which is especially important if your job history does not align closely with the position you are pursuing.

Use the cover letter to demonstrate that you are excited about the position and the company, and to emphasize what you bring to the table that your resume may not highlight.

## It's Not About You, It's About Them

Before we get started, it's important to acknowledge that **the cover letter isn't really about you\*\*\*—\*it's about your reader\*\*** (recruiter/hiring manager engineering lead). You need to focus on understanding the reader's perspective and not your own. Many people fall into the trap of saying, "I'm awesome and I want this really bad," but you must explain your value to them in terms they actually care about.

Though enthusiasm definitely counts, don't expect to win any points by explaining how good the opportunity will be for you. Your reader **does not care**. They want you because you will make their life easier, so focus all your energy on showing why that is the case.

## What to Include:

Your cover letter should be brief, relevant, and free of generic nonsense. You should be able to give it to your mom and have her understand what it means. Be eloquent but not formal.

Pick out a few highlights from your background to emphasize. This is where you get to explain to the company how your specific background

helps you fit into the role. A standard template for a cover letter is three paragraphs broken down as follows:

### **Introduction/I'm excited about this role because...**

Use your first paragraph to introduce yourself to the hiring manager/recruiter and the company. Express why you are interested in the role and why you are interested in working with that specific company, as opposed to working at any other company. Spend some time on the company's website to figure out what makes them interesting to you. The more you can be specific and enthusiastic about the company, the more you will stand out as a candidate.

### **I'm a great fit for this role because...**

Use this paragraph to explain how your past experiences, education, and skills relate and how they qualify you for this role. Be specific about your skills and experience. Choose one or two examples to help demonstrate why you have the skills they need.

Make the connections from your background for the hiring manager to help them see you in the role. For example, highlight your financial skills that you picked up from a volunteer opportunity or showcase your writing skills from your blog. Showing those parallels and how you would use those experiences to benefit the company will help the company make those connections as well.

### **Reiterating interest and call to action**

This is your closing paragraph, so be sure to reiterate your interest in the position and let the company know that you are eager to get in touch and

continue contact.

## What Not to Include:

As mentioned a bit earlier, remember your audience—a potentially overworked recruiter or hiring manager who just wants someone to make their job easier. They don't really care who you are, they just want to know why you stand out from the other 100 candidates and why you would be a good fit.

**Do not make your cover letter a repetition of your resume.** This is the opportunity to show more of your personality to the company. There is no point to sending in a cover letter that simply covers everything your resume has outlined, that is essentially sending your resume twice.

**Do not focus solely on yourself and your qualifications in a cover letter.**

A cover letter is a warm “one-sided” introduction to the company. Research the company, find the aspects of the company that appeal to you (company mission, culture, values, product) and let the hiring manager know why you are interested. This will help the company envision you in the position and make them more inclined to invite you in for an interview.

**Do not apologize for skills you don't have.** There is no need to tell someone what you don't know. Example: “While I don't have experience in Python, I do have experience in...” STOP! I know what you're probably thinking. You're trying to be considerate of their time and prove that you've read the qualifications. Resist the urge to wave the giant I'M A NEWBIE flag. Let the reader draw their own conclusions because they might think you're awesome! Keep the tone positive. Focus on your

strengths and convey your enthusiasm to continue learning and growing.

Here is an example of a cover letter that is halfway there, but is not taking full advantage of the opportunity to express their interest in the position:

*To whom it may concern:*

*The enclosed resume is presented for your consideration regarding the position of Web Developer. I have four years professional experience in IT and administrative from HomeStore and SemiconductorsR'Us along with over a decade worth of experience in computers and would like to continue my growth as a Web Developer.*

*During my career, I have demonstrated an exceptional ability to meet organizational objectives and demands. In addition to my CNC operating, I am a skilled computer specialist, having served as "computer guru" for the last three years to many employees along with my CNC Operating duties at MegaEnterprise. I am certain I would prove to be a further asset to your company as well.*

This is a good start to a cover letter, but hiring managers would like to see more interest in the position and company that you are applying to, as well as how your background fits. This cover letter does a good job of explaining the applicant's experience and capability, but does not convey any actual interest in the company or the position and the hiring manager will notice that. You do not want to give the impression that

you will take “any” job, you want to show that you have invested time and care into figuring out whether this is the position and company for you. Hiring managers want people on their team that are excited to be there. They want people who are motivated by the product and the mission.

## How to Stand-Out!

You do not need to write a brand new cover letter for each position but, you will need a strong template to work from and appropriate formatting. It is important to leave enough space in your cover letter template to express your interest in a specific company.

Showing that you’ve done your research on a company and are excited about this opportunity (not just any opportunity) can really help you stand out as a candidate. For a hiring manager, it can be very apparent when a candidate has simply used a template, changed the company name in the introduction, and pressed “Send”. Researching the company and channeling why you want to work there will elevate your cover letter.

Another great way to show that your cover letter isn’t a generic application is to address it to a specific person. If the hiring manager isn’t stated in the job ad, use LinkedIn or the company’s “About” or “Team” pages to make an educated guess about who the hiring manager might be and address the letter to them. Don’t worry too much about guessing wrong. Even if you are wrong, it shows that you took the time to try to get it right. And when in doubt, just address your letter to the CEO or CTO.

Be sure to thoroughly edit your cover letter, just as you would with your resume. Typos and grammatical errors will demonstrate a sloppy work ethic.

Here is an example of a well-written and concise cover letter that you can review:

*Dear Ms. Campbell,*

*I am excited to apply for the open position of Web Developer with Vend.ly. This role sounds perfect for me as I would be able to combine my skills in UX/UI design and programming. I really admire and appreciate Vend.ly's values in creating a diverse and inclusive workplace. I feel that I would fit right in as I share these values and find creativity and collaboration key to developing successful interfaces. With my strong background in computer science and UX/UI design, I would love to use my skills to communicate effectively with developers and create smooth, enjoyable experiences for users.*

*While working for a digital media agency, SuperAwesome Beats, I worked on several projects in the areas of advertising, competitive research, and front-end development. I cultivated relationships with clients as I worked one-on-one with them to help develop and clarify the user experiences they desired. I believe my experience would help foster an inclusive design and development process at Vend.ly that produces a cohesive end result. My education and experience in technology and design give me a unique approach to your open position in web development.*

*Thank you for your consideration. I'm excited to utilize my experience in design and development along with my passion for creating a seamless user experience to contribute to the Vend.ly team. I look forward to speaking with you and presenting my work.*

## Additional Tips & Resources

- [31 Attention-Grabbing Cover Letter Examples](#)
- [Forget templates. Here's how to write an ideal cover letter and land that job interview.](#)
- [I've Read More Than 300 Cover Letters, And This Is How I Decide If They're Good Or Bad Within Three Minutes](#)
- [The Developer Cover Letter](#)
- [My Proven Formula for Writing a Great Cover Letter](#)
- [4 Career Change Cover Letter Tips](#)

## Assignment

Submit a link to your cover letter below.

From here your cover letter will be submitted to one of our professional profile developers who will work with you through two rounds of edits. Please ensure that you complete this as soon as possible as this is a requirement for graduation.

## Checkpoint



Submit your ideas or a link to your work here and use it as a conversation starter during your next mentor session.

This checkpoint will not be graded, but is still required.

Share your ideas here...

**bold** *italic* ``code`` > quote - bullet list

Preview

Outline

Submit Your Work

[Report a typo or other issue](#)

[Go to Overview](#)