

# COVER Letters



## Quick Cover Letter Answers

### Why Develop a Cover Letter?

A cover letter introduces you and your qualifications to prospective employers. Next to your résumé, the cover letter is the most important document in your job search.

### A Cover Letter Should:

- Explain why you are sending a résumé
  - do not send a résumé without a cover letter
  - do not make the reader guess what you are asking/applying for; be specific
- Tell specifically how you learned about the position or organization
  - it is appropriate to mention the name of a person who recommended you (with their permission)
- Convince the reader to look at your résumé
  - must be well written, error free, and targeted to the specific employer
- Call attention to your background
  - education, leadership, experience that is relevant to the position
  - be specific and use examples if possible
- Provide or refer to any information specifically requested
  - availability date, reference to an attached writing sample
- Inform the reader how and when you plan to follow up
  - phone call or email by a certain date

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## Grab the reader's attention

"Ultimately any letter is only as good as the individual sentences that carry the message; the most grammatically correct sentences in the world won't necessarily get you interviews, because such prose can read as though every breath of life has been squeezed out of it. Your goal is to communicate an energizing message and entice the reader to action."

~Martin Yate, [Knock'em Dead Cover Letters](#)

# Cover Letter Components

## Formatting is Key

The cover letter should be one page long in standard business letter format.

### Address

- include street address, city, state
- DO NOT include your name

### Date

- use the date that you plan to mail the letter

### Employer Contact Information

- include contact's first and last name
- job title
- organization name
- street address, city, state, zip

### Greeting

- use Dear Mr./Ms./Dr.
- a colon (:) should end the greeting

### Paragraph 1

- state the reason for writing
- name the specific position or type of work (full-time, internship) for which you are applying
- indicate from which source you learned of the opening

### Paragraphs 2 & 3

- highlight related education, experience and activities
- use specific examples to emphasize accomplishments and relevant skills
- present a direct match between your qualifications and the job requirements

### Paragraph 4

- indicate your interest in an interview
- give specific information on how you intend to follow up
- express appreciation for the employer's time and consideration

Do not forget to sign your cover letter!

## Career Services

### Cover Letter Resources

Appointments can be made to review a draft of your cover letter. Call the office M-F, 8-12 or 1-5 to schedule an appointment.

careers@hope.edu 616-395-7950

# Cover Letter Checklist

Before you submit your cover letter to a potential employer, make sure you have included the following:

- If possible, is your cover letter addressed to a specific person?
- In response to an ad, did you state the specific job title?
- Did you use specific examples to sell yourself?
- Did you make references to your résumé?
- Are your top and bottom margins relatively equal?
- Did you remember to say thank you?
- Will your letter attract and hold the reader's attention?
- Are there too many "I's"?
- Is the letter concise and error-free?
- Did you sign the letter?
- Is the letter on bond paper that matches your résumé?

# Cover Letter Example

Your address  
City, State Zip  
Date

Contact Name  
Title  
Organization Name  
Street Address  
City, State Zip

Dear Mr./Ms./Dr.:

*Paragraph 1:* Indicate specifically what you are applying for and how you found out about the position. If you know of any personal contact(s) within the company who assisted you in finding the position opening - and you have permission to use his/her name - this would be the paragraph to mention the individual(s).

*Paragraph 2 and 3:* Call attention to the specific qualifications that make you a strong candidate for this opportunity. This may be relevant education, work experience, skills, or other characteristics that would meet the needs and challenges the employer faces. Refer the reader to your résumé. These are the key paragraphs, which can differentiate you from the next candidate.

In addition to highlighting your qualifications, demonstrate knowledge of the company/organization.

*Paragraph 4:* Request a personal appointment to discuss the opportunity. Indicate when and how you are going to contact the person to discuss your status for this opportunity. Thank the reader for his or her time and consideration regarding your application.

Sincerely,

(sign your name)

Your name typed