Guide to Cover Letters

Cover letters are designed to complement a résumé and are used to entice the employer to call for an interview. Note: Be careful not to restate your résumé in paragraph form; however, it is ok to highlight a few key points and achievements related to the desired position.

Your cover letter should be written in formal letter format and fill one page. Most importantly, it should impress the employer with your knowledge of the organization – research before you write! Here are a few tips to help you get started:

Header

- Select a letter format (block style is recommended) including your full name, address, and date along with the recipient’s contact information. Try to address the letter to a specific person rather than "Dear Sir/Madame".
- You can find out a contact’s name by visiting their website or calling the organization and asking to whom the letter should be addressed.

Paragraph 1 (Opening)

- State why you are writing and name the position in which you are interested.
- State where you heard of the position. Mention anyone by name who suggested that you apply (especially if that person might be significant to the reader – networking!) *Optional
- Explain why you are interested in that particular organization and type of work.
- Demonstrate in your writing that you have done your research on their company. Each letter should be customized to each employer!

Paragraph 2 & 3 (Body)

- These paragraphs are your sales pitch. State the top reasons why you are worthy of an interview – why are you the top candidate?
- Think critically about what you have to offer and make that known to the reader. What can you do for them?
- Demonstrate how your education, motivation, and record of accomplishments would benefit their organization – use examples of your achievements.
- Keep your tone positive and upbeat. Avoid drawing attention to qualifications you may be lacking.
- Always be professional. Do not try to be funny, clever, or too personal.

Paragraph 4 (Closing)

- Thank the reader for his or her time.
- State a specific time when you will follow up to discuss the position further.
- Express your sincere interest in the position.
- Close the letter with "Sincerely", "Warm Regards", "Yours Respectfully".
- Sign the letter with your signature and typed name below.