



Cover Letter Tips

Why a Cover Letter?

A cover letter is an important part of the application process. Most companies, co-ops, or internships will require a cover letter, but it is good practice to submit one with your resume whether it is required or not. The cover letter is a way to introduce yourself and give the employer a good reason to continue on to review your resume. A well-constructed cover letter is just as important as a well put together resume.

Purpose of a Cover Letter

The cover letter must answer some very basic information, and all cover letters generally follow a similar pattern. As you gain experience, you can learn to move some of these components around so that it fits with the position you are applying for, but for now we suggest sticking to this outline.

Header

Include your name and address in the header, make sure it identical to what appears on your resume. As well include the address of the Employer you are writing to.

Introductory Paragraph

Make sure you begin by greeting the person who will be receiving the resume, this is usually listed in the job description. We recommend that you check the company website, or even call to find a name to address it to. If you do not know the name you can address it as such, Dear Hiring Manager. Begin your introduction by stating why you are writing the cover letter. (ex. "I am writing to apply for the position of..."). Briefly introduce yourself, and what would make you the right person for this position.

Second Paragraph

In this paragraph you want to talk about the organization itself. What attracted you to work for them in particular? What do you know about the organization? It is beneficial to do a little homework and find out some key information about the organization and include that in the cover letter. As well be sure to include key words from the job description. Did the company describe itself in a particular way, or provide a mission statement? What words jump out, and how can you incorporate them into the cover letter? Do not talk about yourself too much, but do include why you want to work for them, and you would be valuable for THEIR company.

Third Paragraph

Now you can summarize why you are the best person for this position, borrowing from the previous two paragraphs. Sell yourself and your skills. What specific skills do you have? Do you have awards,

certificates or accomplishments that the employer should know of? Use this time to expand on your resume by filling in the gaps between experience and education.

Conclusion

Conclude by letting them know you are looking forward to an opportunity to interview. Let the employer know they can contact you directly and that you will accommodate an interview request. Be proactive in your approach. Avoid overusing the word "I". For example, instead of saying "I have enclosed a copy of my resume" you can restructure sentence to use "you". The result would be "Enclosed you will find a copy of my resume." A rule of thumb is to try not to use "I" more than twice per paragraph. Finish with a generic sign off and your name.

Guidelines

1. Every cover letter you write should be original, do not use a generic letter. This means if you are applying for five positions at five companies, you need to compose five cover letters. There are elements that will remain the same, but make sure to tailor each cover letter to the specific company and job description.
2. Send it to a specific person. As we previously stated, try your hardest to find the name of a person to send the cover letter and resume to. Always include a title if it is known, and use Mr., or Ms., in your greeting.
3. This must be typed. Be sure to use the same font, and font sizing as your resume.
4. Keep it brief. A cover letter should never exceed more than one page. Avoid clichés, wordiness, and overlong explanations.
5. Proofread, and have someone proofread it for you. Make sure that your grammar and spelling are all okay.