

Guidelines for Cover Letter Writing

Overview -

A cover letter is a concise and formal one-page document that is typically included in internship or job applications. Its purpose is to introduce yourself to the employer, express your interest in the organization or specific job role, and highlight your strongest qualifications for the position.

By complementing your resume, a well-crafted cover letter has the potential to intrigue an employer and motivate them to invite you for an interview. This allows them to learn more about you and determine if you are a good fit for their organization.

Strategies-

1. Customizing Your Letter
 - a. Adjust and update your cover letter for every application you submit.
 - b. Review the position description closely for a clear outline of requirements and ensure your letter directly addresses the qualifications needed.
 - c. It's important to tailor your letter to best suit each position and to highlight your skills and qualifications for that specific internship/job and employer.
2. Personalize the Letter
 - a. When possible, address the letter to a specific individual using their name, title (Dr., Ms. Mr., etc.), and position with the organization (Director of Human Resources, etc.).
 - b. If no one is listed in the job description, it may be difficult to identify the contact via the company website or through networking. Do not assume that the hiring manager has a particular gender by opening the letter with "Dear Sir" or "Dear Madam." Instead, "Dear Director of Human Resources" or "Dear Hiring Official".
3. Proofread
 - a. Seek feedback from multiple individuals to review and provide comments on your letter.
 - b. Thoroughly examine your document until you are assured it is free of errors and authentically represents your skills and abilities.
 - c. Remember that spell check might not catch correctly spelled words misused, such as "there" instead of "their."
4. Focus on the Reader
 - a. Revise sentences to minimize the excessive use of "I" by incorporating "my" and "me." For instance, transform "I have enclosed a copy of my resume" to "Enclosed, you will find a copy of my resume."
 - b. Illustrate to the reader the value you can bring to the organization.

Formatting & Content Guidelines-

1. **Consistency:** Maintain a consistent, professional look by using the same font and similar size as your resume.
2. **Limit Your Letter to One Page:** Ensure clarity and conciseness by avoiding unnecessary words. Maintain margins of no less than .5" and use a font size smaller than 10 points.
3. **Enhance the readability:** Your letter should include a wide variety of different sentence structures. Create an engaging/ effective letter by balancing long sentences with shorter ones and employing transitional words and phrases.
4. **Include Relevant Content:** Furnish accurate, specific information related to your professional qualifications for an internship, job, or graduate school in your cover letter.
5. **Use Action Verbs and Adjectives:** Infuse your content with action-oriented language. Concentrate on presenting objective, factual evidence of your qualifications to captivate the reader's attention.

Submitted a Cover Letter

1. Submission of a cover letter can take various forms. Consider the following guidelines when including a cover letter in a comprehensive, tailored job application:
2. Thoroughly review each job description to understand the employer's preferences for application materials and their preferred format.
3. When applying via email, attach your cover letter (alongside other requested materials) to the email. In the email body, briefly convey your interest in the company and the position, specifying the materials attached.
4. Due to the typically concise nature of emails and the extended length of cover letters, it is not advisable to include the cover letter in the email body. Instead, attach your documents in PDF format if possible.
5. If utilizing an online application form, you might be prompted to either copy and paste your letter into a text box or upload documents directly into the system as part of the application procedure.

Sample Letter Format

Contact Information: Your name, address, city, state, zip code, phone number, and email should be positioned at the top left of the letter.

Date: Indicate the month, day, and year of submission for the cover letter.

Contact Details (Recipient): Include the recipient's name, job title, company, address, city, state, and zip code.

Greetings Options: Dear Mr./Ms. _____; Dear Hiring Manager; Dear Search Committee:

Opening Section: Clearly state the purpose of the letter. Introduce yourself academically and professionally, explaining your interest in the company and the specific position. Specify the position you are applying for and mention where you discovered the opportunity (Handshake/LinkedIn, company website, personal contact/networking, etc.). Express your enthusiasm for the position and your desire to contribute to the organization.

Middle Section: Highlight your most significant qualifications in relation to the company and the position's description. Avoid duplicating information from your resume. Instead, focus on showcasing key experiences or education, providing supporting evidence for your suitability. This can include specific accomplishments, skills developed through work, coursework, campus or community involvement, and other relevant activities. Ensure a clear connection between your qualifications and the job requirements.

Optional Closing Section: Some writers prefer to introduce their strongest qualifications in the second paragraph and elaborate on them in the third paragraph. If you choose to include a third paragraph, use it to offer detailed supporting evidence, such as examples, to reinforce your qualifications.