

Career Seminar

Or

How to Construct a Cover Letter



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Think of your cover letter as another tool in your job search arsenal, says Betty Corrado, owner of career-coaching and resume-writing firm Career Authenticity in Cos Cob, Connecticut. “The cover letter is a key part of your marketing package,” she says. “Use it as an opportunity to convey your brand and value proposition.”



This procedure will why we write cover letters, explain the format of a professional cover letter, how to make one, and common mistakes to avoid.

Why Should You Write a Cover Letter?

1. It tells the employer who you are and why they want you.

In the body of the letter, you have the room to elaborate on your experiences and interest in the position.

2. It showcases your writing ability.

Resumes have strict formulas with bullet points and short, choppy statements. A cover letter allows you to write more fluently. Since employers like to see that you can communicate well in writing, a proper cover letter puts the right foot forward from the get-go.

3. It lets you highlight your strengths.

Your resume lists the roles you played and the significant accomplishments you achieved in your most recent positions. In your cover letter, you can explain and draw attention to a few noteworthy experiences from your resume. It also helps start to demonstrate your personality, which is often even more important than your qualifications.

4. It shows that you're serious about the opportunity.

One of the biggest complaints recruiters and managers have when they're actively looking for a new hire is the applicants' failure to provide a cover letter. When you apply for a job by simply submitting your resume and nothing more, the hiring manager could interpret this as a lazy move on your part. If two equally qualified candidates apply, do you want to be the one who took the time to write a cover letter, or the one who didn't?

5. It makes up for a resume that can't stand alone.

Granted, your resume should be effective if unaccompanied by a cover letter, but in case that resume just isn't as persuasive as you thought it was, a cover letter can make up for it. There are numerous instances where a strong cover letter - not the resume - instigates a callback.

6. It sets up the follow-up.

Instead of leaving the next step in the employer's hands, use your cover letter to take control of the follow-up process. In the closing, specify a specific date and time that you will call them. The follow-up in your cover letter eliminates the waiting game so you can move on with an interview or move on to another job opening.

Cover Letter: Demonstration that You Understand the Business



"Don't look at a cover letter as just some other hoop you need to leap through in order to be considered for a job," says Alex Twersky, co-founder and vice president of career consulting firm Resume Deli. ***"Your cover letter, if written properly, provides a narrative opportunity to emphasize your grasp of the job's requirements and how your particular skills and accomplishments map to the job."***

"Managers are looking for you to show that you understand their business and that you care about what they need," says Fletcher. "The cover letter is the only way of showing this, and that's why you need to write a strong, customized letter that directly addresses the company's needs."

A good cover letter is actually a lot more like an interview than a resume. It's your opportunity to become more than just data points on a hiring manager's checklist.

1. Personalization

Adjusting your resume to best suit the position you're applying to is important, and it's even more crucial when it comes to cover letters. Research the company and take some time to consider how your skills and experience line up with their needs. Keep that in the back of your mind while writing your cover letter.

2. Personality

"If you're going to send a boring, generic letter, there's no way for a hiring manager to get a sense of your communication style or personality," says Michele Mavi, director of internal recruiting and content development at Atrium Staffing. "Even worse, they may assume that your lack of originality means you're incapable of it, or at the very least, that the position isn't important enough to you to put any effort into your cover letter."

3. Knowing Your Audience – Fit the Company Culture

"Whatever approach you take, be sure you understand the culture of the organization you're applying to and write with that voice in mind," says Mavi. "Companies aren't just looking for people with the right skills; they are looking for people with the right skills who fit into their culture as well."

4. Demonstrating Your Skills

"Figure out what business problems your reader is likely kvetching about, and then tell them - right here in your cover letter -- how you would go about addressing them. This shows that you're thinking, and a true problem-solver."

What Does the Company Need? Research the Company

Before you can write the cover letter, you will have to thoroughly research the company that the letter is for.

See MMspire Trading Company's procedure "How to Research a Company for Interview Purposes v16" for details on this process. Not only will researching the company allow you to effectively write a cover letter, but it will also help you answer and ask questions if you get a formal interview.



After researching the company, you should know exactly what is the company business, what will be the job for which you are interviewing and maybe have an idea of who will be interviewing you.

1. Be careful of the fonts you employ. Think conservative.
Arial, Helvetica or Times Roman should do fine. These are attractive and professional fonts that any computer should be able to read.
2. Use a one inch margin
3. Use good quality paper, preferably bonded. White or off-white.
4. Paper for resume and cover letter should match
5. Fonts on resume and cover letter should match
6. Online applications: fonts should match resume. Times Roman 12 is really good
7. Do not use watermarks or graphics
8. Do not use borders around your cover letter stationery



Addressing the Cover Letter



Address your cover letter and resume directly to the hiring manager and/or recruit interviewing you.

Use one of two formats:

- Name across the top format
- Name along the left side format

Your Name
Street Address
City, State, Zip Code
Phone Number

Date

Hiring Manager/Recruiter Name
Job Title
Name of Organization
Street Address
City, State, Zip Code

Dear Mr./Ms. _____ :

Format a:

Angela Job

2515 Main Way SE • Smyrna, Georgia 33333 • (770) 555-3266 • ajob@aol.com

January 5, 2007

Hiring Agent Name, Title
Company Name
Address
City, State Zip

Dear Hiring Manager:

Format b:

Elaine Ritchie
3160 Sigley Road
Topeka, KS66607
Mobile: 785-550-6611
E-mail id: r.elaine@example.com

Mr. Michael Ward
Harem Technology
3657 Dark Hollow Road
Forked River, NJ8731

January 11, 2011

Notice the usage of the COLON after the address

Cover Letter Paragraph Structure: Four Paragraphs on One Page



First Paragraph

- State the position you are applying for.
- Describe how you heard about the job (reference that works for the company, recruiters, company website, etc.)
- When you are available to begin working

Second Paragraph

- Why you are interested in that type of work– be very specific and mention specific skills
- Why you want to work for that specific company – mention one specific point of WHY

Third Paragraph

- Summarize your strengths and how they might be used to benefit the organization
- Connect your skills with the skills that are required for the job

Last Paragraph

- Mention any dates that you won't be available for interview
- Thank the employer and say you look forward to hearing from them soon.

Sincerely,

(Your Signature in black ink)

Your typed name

Cover Letter Paragraph Structure: First Paragraph Samples



First Paragraph

- State the position you are applying for.
- Describe how you heard about the job (reference that works for the company, recruiters, company website, etc.)
- When you are available to begin working

Examples:

1. I understand from a classified ad posted in the San Francisco Chronicle, that you have a need for an experienced sales professional for the West Coast area. I am very interested in learning more about the position and believe my recent work experience makes me an ideal candidate.
2. My outgoing personality, my finance experience, and my recently completed education make me a strong candidate for a position as a Financial Analyst with your company.
3. I wanted to apply for a position as a Salesperson with your company. I read a recent article which highlighted your company as one of the fastest growing leaders in the Business to Business sector. I would enjoy the chance to bring my proven track record in Sales to your team.
4. I was very interested in pursuing the Product Marketing Position I saw advertised on your website.

Cover Letter Paragraph Structure: First Paragraph Samples

January 25, 20XX

Mr./Ms. First Name Last Name
Name of Organization
Street Address
City, State Zip Code

In your first paragraph clearly state who you are, why you writing and make a connection to the position to which you are applying.

Dear Mr./Ms. Last Name:

As a current undergraduate at Yale University, I write to apply for the ACHIEVE Charter School Summer Internship Program. I am drawn to ACHIEVE's focus on narrowing the achievement gap found in economically disadvantaged urban schools and am committed to the goal of empowering students with the educational foundation they need to succeed in their future endeavors. As someone who is drawn to interactive, collegial learning environments and seeks out opportunities to employ my research and communication skills, I feel I would be able to make a strong contribution to the ACHIEVE Charter School Summer Internship Program.

Cover Letter Paragraph Structure: Second Paragraph Samples

Second Paragraph

- Why you are interested in that type of work– be very specific and mention specific skills
- Why you want to work for that specific company – mention one specific point of WHY

Describe your recent skills, work experience and/or education. Start relating these to the position in question as far as possible. For example, concentrate on highlighting aspects of your past work which would help you fulfil the duties of this position.

Examples:

1. After finishing my Business degree, I was hired by Company X to help grow their West Coast territory. I was responsible for establishing and growing a number of different accounts in the Technology sector. During my employment, I was promoted to Senior Sales Representative and given the opportunity of handling larger, more established client accounts.
2. As a recent graduate of the San Francisco School of Business, I put myself through school by working jobs in advertising sales and retail. I feel these business experiences helped solidify my work ethic and build on my formal education.
3. This May, I will receive my BA degree from Highland University with a dual degree in economics and art history. I have recently completed my senior thesis exploring the development of poster art in America, for which I have been awarded academic honors.
4. In my current role I manage the advertising on a Top 50 consumer website. My job requires that I act as an advocate for our internal sales staff as well as for our clients. I was intimately involved in the site redesign from an advertising sales perspective and helped roll out several new ad products.

Cover Letter Paragraph Structure: Second Paragraph Samples

Provide quantifiable examples of how you have developed skills applicable to the position you are seeking.

...and I would like to bring my skills and experience to your office this summer.

I have developed and honed strong interpersonal and managing skills throughout my time at Yale. As the personnel manager of the Saybrook Orchestra, I have recruited for and helped to manage the 90-person orchestra, involving constant collaboration and compromising with various musicians and people. Furthermore, I served on the Secretariat for the 2006 Yale Model United Nations Conference, coordinating with over 1300 high school students and 150 faculty advisors spanning 15 states and 10 countries to run a four-day Model UN conference. Much of my experience with the Model UN conference involved responding to a myriad of concerns and being able to troubleshoot problems ranging from fee payments to schedule crises to instances of student disorderliness. All of these experiences have developed my ability to adapt quickly in dealing with a vast range of different people, an ability that will come in handy when I will be expected to deal with the variety of people ranging from clients to judges as a law clerk intern.

Cover Letter Paragraph Structure: Third Paragraph Samples



Third Paragraph

- Summarize your strengths and how they might be used to benefit the organization
- Connect your skills with the skills that are required for the job

Continue tailoring yourself to the job description in the hiring manager's mind. Use the duties and requirements listed in the job posting to elaborate on what you would bring the company.

Examples:

1. I have very strong account management skills and enjoy helping my clients find solutions to their business and technology problems. In my last six months with my current company, I have brought in over 15% of the business, and have exceeded all of my sales goals.
2. I believe I have the maturity, skills, and abilities to have a successful career as a Financial Analyst.
3. At university, I focused my extracurricular efforts on writing and editing for the local newspaper. Subscriptions while I was an editor increased by 10 percent.
4. I have excellent communication skills and have generally been regarded in my last two positions as an effective and affable team player. I like solving problems, changing minds and winning hearts. Although the role of Product Manager is a slightly new one for me, I feel my previous education, experience and unique skills lend themselves well to the expected and unexpected challenges this job will bring.

Cover Letter Paragraph Structure: Third Paragraph Samples



Middle Paragraphs

- Do not simply restate your resume; explain how the experiences listed in your resume demonstrate your qualifications;
- Elaborate on related experiences, coursework, or activities to provide specific examples to demonstrate skills and attributes the employer is seeking;
- These paragraphs should answer the following question: what can you bring to the position and employer?

competitions, will enable me to be an effective communicator for the firm.

The Monitor Group's ability to produce valuable recommendations for its clients depends on the talent and teamwork of its consultants. My leadership experience has given me the skills to handle unfamiliar situations and work with others to solve problems. From planning events as president of Davenport College Council to raising funds for a community youth program, my extracurricular endeavors have required that I learn both how to lead and how to follow. I am never daunted by a steep learning curve but I also know when I should ask for help. My experience as a leader in diverse fields will enable me to effectively and prudently tackle any research assignment I may encounter at the firm.

Cover Letter Paragraph Structure: Fourth Paragraph Samples



Last Paragraph

- Mention any dates that you won't be available for interview
- Thank the employer and say you look forward to hearing from them soon.

Request an interview and offer contact information.

Examples:

1. I look forward to speaking with you further regarding any Sales-related opportunities with Company X. I can be reached on my cell phone at (415) XXX-XXXX.
2. I will be returning to California at the end of May, and would very much to talk with you concerning this position. I will follow up this letter with a phone call to see if I can arrange a time to meet with you.
3. I intend to visit the Chicago area in early April to prepare for my move to the city this summer. I would appreciate the opportunity to meet with you during my upcoming trip to discuss the possibility of my employment with your company.
4. I welcome further contact and would enjoy discussing this and potentially other positions with you.

Cover Letter Paragraph Structure: Fourth Paragraph Samples



In closing, I would be delighted to be a part of your team this summer. I am quite flexible as I will be in Boston for the entirety of the summer and am open to either a part-time or full-time position. If you would like to meet with me, I will be in the Boston area from March 8 through March 21. I will call you during the week of February 16 to inquire about the viability of scheduling a short meeting at a time that is convenient for you. In the interim, please do not hesitate to contact me at the number below. Thank you very much for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth Yale
PO Box 2xxxxx
New Haven, CT 065xx
(555) xxx-xxxx
first.last@yale.edu

At the end of your letter of inquiry, present follow-up options and set the stage for a future conversation.

Watch the Tone of the Cover Letter

- E-mail has made our communication online much more informal. Despite this, cover letters submitted online should still be scrupulously reviewed before sending.
- Don't be overly familiar or use clichés that show a lack of professionalism on your part. The cover letter is an introduction to parties unknown. How often do you continue talking to the person at a dinner party who is overbearing or presumes to know too much about you and your business.
- Likewise, don't plead for an interview. Your cover letter explains why a hiring manager should want to interview you, describing how your objectives, skills and experience would make you a valuable addition to the team.
- Be polite. Be specific. Be professional. Don't beg.
- **SPELL CHECK AND GRAMMAR CHECK**

General Rules for Cover Letters



- Keep your cover letter to one page. If your letter is too long, no one will read it.
- Use 12 point, Times New Roman font.
- One inch margins
- Do not embarrass yourself with over the top statements. This came from a cover letter to JP Morgan which became the laughing stock of Wall Street.
- Do not simply reiterate the information in your resume
- Show you have done your research! What type of culture does the company have and what makes that the right fit for you?
- Always double check grammar and spelling

That semester I achieved a 3.93, and in the same time I managed to bench double my bodyweight and do 35 pull-ups.

