

How to Write a Cover Letter



A cover letter is the letter that introduces you to a potential employer. Like a résumé, the cover letter gives you the opportunity to tell the employer why the employer should hire you. A properly crafted cover letter will entice the reader to not only examine your résumé, but to call you for an interview.

There Are 11 Basic Components To A Good Cover Letter

- 1 Every cover letter needs to have your address on it, either in a letterhead or typed at the top as shown. You may want to include your e-mail address.
- 2 The date you are writing is the next important part of the letter. Keep a copy of the letter so you can know when your first contact was made.
- 3 Always type the address just as it appears in the advertisement or job posting.
- 4 This is called the "salutation." Every letter should have one. It is your way of saying "hello." If you don't know a name, use the salutation shown.
- 5 The first paragraph is the statement of your purpose of writing. You need to identify the job you are applying for and say that you are interested in applying.
- 6 This is the "meat and potatoes" of your letter. This is where you explain why you are qualified for the position. Be sure to highlight the qualifications and personal attributes that match those requested in the advertisement.

	1	45 Ace Drive Your Town, NC 99999
	2	Today's Date
Acme Widget Company Personnel Department 123 Any Street Alltown, NC 99999	3	
Dear Sir or Madam:	4	
5	I am writing in regards to your advertisement in the Sunday edition of the <i>Times Herald</i> . I am interested in the personnel assistant position. My résumé is enclosed for your review.	
6	I have worked for two years as an administrative assistant in the human resources department of a large medical center. In this job, I am responsible for the weekly payroll for 24 people, maintained the payroll bank account and conducted training for new employees.	
	1	I would welcome the opportunity to discuss my qualifications with you.
	2	I can be reached by phone at (999) 555-4545 during the evening or by e-mail to msd@internet.net any time. If you do need to contact me during the day, I can be reached at work, with discretion please, at (999) 555-1212.
	3	Sincerely,
	4	Mary Smith Doe
Enclosure: Résumé	5	

- 1 The next to last paragraph of your letter is where you try to "set the hook." One option is to state that you will be calling next week to see if an interview can be arranged. If you do this, be sure you do call exactly when you say you will or you will lose your credibility. If you don't feel comfortable cold calling the employer, use this paragraph to tell them you would welcome an opportunity for an interview.
- 2 Always include your telephone number. If possible, include a day time, an evening number and cell phone number. Be sure to provide a convenient time for them to call you.
- 3 This is the closing of the letter. Always use one. If you prefer a closing with more than one word (*Very truly yours* or *Sincerely yours*), be sure you capitalize only the first word and always use an ending comma for proper punctuation.
- 4 Type your name here. There are always four lines between the closing and your signature line. Make sure you actually sign it in this area.
- 5 Be sure that you note on the letter that your résumé is enclosed. Don't forget to enclose it!

Review the [JobSearch Guide Sample Cover Letters](#).

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Setting the stage...

The cover letter is often the first impression that the employer will have of you. Do not minimize its importance. Approach your letter with seriousness. It is as important as your résumé. You want the reader to be impressed with your cover letter. You want the reader to want to talk

to you. There are books available in libraries and stores on cover letter formats. Check the Internet resources below for web sites that provide sample cover letters. You will want to also Google “sample cover letters” to get more samples.

Obtaining a name...

It is best to have the name of the person to whom you are sending the letter. If you do not have a name, locate the phone number of the organization to which you are applying. Call and politely ask the person who answers the phone to give you the name of the person who is responsible for hiring for the position that is available. Make sure you get the exact spelling of the person's name and verify it. Also, ask for the title of the person, since titles vary from organization to organization.



Word Choices

How you word your letter is very important:

Don't just say...

I ran a cash register.

I babysat.

I worked as a waitress.

I was a night manager at a convenience store.

I answered the phone.

I can type.

I fixed cars.

I was a receptionist.

When you can say this:

I operated a cash register and was responsible for balancing the cash drawer at the end of each shift.

I was responsible for the daily care of two children. This included preparing nutritious meals, planning educational activities for them and providing a safe and enjoyable atmosphere.

I have experience hosting, as well as waiting tables. I am quick with my side work and had over a 20% rate of tipping.

As night manager at the convenience store, I was responsible for the total operation of the store including cash register operation, cash balancing, restocking, maintaining a neat and clean environment, dealing with vendors and ensuring friendly and prompt service to the customers.

I handled multiple phone lines, routed calls and took messages.

I have experience with a number of common word processing programs and can type 50 words a minute.

I have experience trouble-shooting and repairing both domestic and foreign autos.

As a receptionist, I handled multiple phone lines, transferred calls, took messages and made appointments. In addition, I received visitors, directed inquiries and ensured a smooth flow of office traffic.



Matching your qualifications to the job

Are you qualified for the job? Employers often list the qualifications of the perfect person, hoping to find someone who comes close. Don't worry if you don't have every qualification listed. What you need to do is help the reader see that you are very close to that perfect person.

- Read the advertisement closely.
- Write down the qualifications listed by the employer on the left side of a piece of paper.
- On the right side, write down the qualifications that you have that closely match those requested.
- Use these items in your letter.

Qualifications:

3 years experience in an office setting.

Word processing experience.

Ability to handle changing priorities.

Qualifications I Possess:

I have 5 years of office experience.

I have knowledge of both WordPerfect and Microsoft Word.

I handle pressure well, can prioritize and can adapt to a changing environment.

Internet resources

http://jobsearch.about.com/od/coverletters/Cover_Letters.htm -- Sample cover letters.

www.coverletterexamples.net/ -- More cover letter information and samples.

www.quintcareers.com/covres.html -- Resources for cover letters.

