

What is the function or purpose of a cover letter?

Cover letters are a vital part of the job search process. Many believe that the cover letter is **as** if not **more** important than the resume. Although that is the case, candidates should always submit a resume too. The cover letter introduces the candidate to the employer. It explains to the employer **WHY** they should take the time to go over a candidate's information. Usually, the cover letter is the initial document an employer reads from the submitted application packet. It allows candidates to communicate how their relevant skills would benefit the company. The cover letter invites the employer to read the resume while the resume encourages employer to meet the candidate in person (the interview). Since the cover letter is often the first impression, it is essential job seekers take the appropriate time to develop and create a well written cover letter.

When should a cover letter be submitted?

A cover letter should **ALWAYS** be submitted with the resume and application. **ALWAYS** submit a cover letter! Most applications are electronic and will ask interested candidates to submit a cover letter. Many applications will not specify whether or not a cover letter is "required." Even if the application directions do not indicate a cover letter is required, still submit one. What if other candidates submit cover letters and you do not? Be sure to take every opportunity to stand out and communicate your interest to the employer!

What if applying via email?

The body of the email will be the cover letter. Attach a copy of your resume to the email and indicate this in the last paragraph of the cover letter. Again, the cover letter should be typed in the body of the email.

What if applying in person?

Job seekers applying for a job posting in person should submit a cover letter as well. The order of the application packet should include the cover letter on top, followed by the resume, and then the application itself underneath. Hand the application packet to the employer in this manner.

Should a job seeker send out the same cover letter to multiple jobs?

Job seekers should **NOT** submit a "generalized" cover letter to employers. Just like the resume, the cover letter should be tailored for the job which the candidate is applying for. The cover letter and resume both provide examples of a candidates writing ability. It is important to articulate your skills clearly and concisely. The cover letter should communicate what the candidate can do for the employer as a potential employee. Along with the resume, this also offers candidates the opportunity to convey how well they understand the job description and relate their experience.



Sample Cover Letter Format

Applicant Name
Street Address
City, State, Zip
Phone Number
Email Address

Current date (Date of the Letter)

Employer's Name
Title
Department
Organization
Street Address
City, State, Zip

Dear Individual's Name or Human Resources Personnel or Interviewer,

INTRODUCTION: succinctly state reason for writing... reference position opening, previous correspondence or contact, mutual friend or acquaintance... indicate any current degrees, skills or positions that would attract their attention. Also indicate where you found the posting.

BODY (2nd & 3rd paragraphs): Give details on purpose of letter... relate your skills and abilities specifically to the position or opening... make reference to attached resume and expand on important themes... write short and complete sentences, avoiding unnecessarily long and complicated terminology... Sell yourself – make them interested in you and what you can offer. Make paragraphs three to five sentences.

CLOSING: State the action you expect from recipient and indicate your next plan of action with a specific date for that action...keep closing short but specific...thank the recipient. The closing paragraph should initiate contact and express the desire to learn more about the job position. Employers appreciate job seekers who want to learn more so they can be the best possible candidate.

Sincerely,

Typed Name (full name)
Title (if appropriate)

Encl. (indicate enclosures, such as a resume)