

COVER LETTERS

1. PURPOSE

Why is a cover letter important? A cover letter tells the employer what type of position you're seeking and calls attention to the skills, talents and experience the employer is looking for in a potential employee. A cover letter should simply spell out how your skills and background match the requirements of the position.

2. FORMAT

A cover letter should be three to four paragraphs, and not exceed 1 page. A sample layout is below:

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

Date

Name
Title
Organization
Address
City, State, Zip Code

Dear Mr/Ms Last Name:

Letter (3-4 Paragraphs, leave a space between paragraphs, do not indent)

Sincerely,

Your Signature

Your Typed Name

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1st Paragraph: Explain why you are writing this letter

- a. If you are writing in response to a job posting, make sure you indicate the position title and where you learned of the position. It is also important to express your interest in the position, and highlight how your education and work experiences match that of the position's qualifications.
 - b. If you are writing a prospecting letter, a letter that inquires about possible job openings, make sure you state your specific job objective. Since you are not applying to a specific position within the company, you need to highlight how your education and work experiences have prepared you for the area of work you are seeking.
- * If you are referred to a potential employer by a friend, colleague or acquaintance, be sure to include their full name and their connection to the company (if there is one) in the first paragraph.

2nd Paragraph: Explain what qualities you will bring to the employer or job

This is your opportunity to explain 3-5 qualities that you would bring to the employer or job. Highlight your knowledge, skills, and experiences that are relevant to the position you are applying for. This is your chance to explain to the employer not just what you would bring to the job, but also how you plan to do it. Emphasize your achievements and problem-solving skills!

3rd Paragraph: Thank the person for their time and tell them how you will follow-up

Close the letter by reiterating your interest in the job and letting the employer know how they can reach you. Make sure you include your phone number and/or email address in this paragraph. It is a good idea to let the employer know you will call him/her on a certain day to confirm that your materials were received; be sure to follow-up within the time frame you tell them! Lastly, thank the employer for their time.

3. COVER LETTER BASICS

Job seekers send out resumes for both "open" and "closed" positions. Only one-fifth of the market is what we call "open". This means that only 20% of job openings are ever publicly known. When a position is publicly known and the job requirements are stated with the position, it is important that your cover letter includes as many of the key words that are on the job description as possible. Keep in mind, the first person to receive your cover letter and resume most likely will not be the hiring manager, rather an administrative assistant or human resources assistant searching for key words.

The other four-fifths of the market is "closed", meaning you can't find out about the positions unless you dig. An uninvited cover letter allows you to take a proactive

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approach to searching for a position. This is your opportunity to explain to a company in a cover letter what type of position you are looking for and your experience. This job-search tool can be very effective, especially if you have a specific set of companies you wish to work for or you are looking to work in a specific geographic location.

A cover letter should be sent to a named individual. Call the company and ask who to address a cover letter to for that specific position. If they don't give you a name, continue searching! Keep in mind, large companies often have several open positions, you want to insure your letter and resume go to the correct individual(s). It is important to follow-up with the company to ensure your cover letter and resume were received. This is also a great opportunity to ask them where they are in the hiring process.

Remember, a cover letter is a little window into your personality. A well written cover letter should include three to five of your qualities that you would bring to this employer or job. Your cover letter can explain things that your resume cannot. For example, if you have large gaps in your employment history or if you are changing your career path, a cover letter can explain this in a positive way.

4. CHECKLIST

- Is your letter neat and attractive?
- Is your cover letter no longer than one page?
- Is every word on the letter spelled correctly?
- Is your grammar, punctuation and capitalization correct?
- Does your letter grab the reader's attention in the first paragraph?
- Did you use action verbs?
- Is your letter interesting?
- Have you read your letter from the employer's perspective?
- Have you avoided listing hobbies or interests unless relevant to the position?

Please feel free to contact us if you have any questions or if we can be of any assistance.

Aimee Andreotti
Staffing Specialist
BERG Professional Staffing

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