

What is a cover letter?

It is a letter introducing your skills and experiences that accompanies a resume sent to prospective employers.

What is the key point to keep in mind when writing a cover letter?

To tailor each letter to the position to which you are applying. Tie your skills/experiences to the needs of the position and the organization.

What is the most common mistake with your cover letter?

Employers want to know what you can do for them — not what they can do for you! You need to think like the employer.

What does it mean to “think like the employer?”

Think about what information the employer wants to know about you. Imagine that your job is to fill this position. What skills and experiences do you think will be important? An employer will ask him/herself about you...

- 1) What has this person done in the past?
- 2) Does this person have the skills to do the job available?
- 3) What has this person accomplished in previous experiences?
- 4) What kind of contributions can I expect in the future from this person?
- 5) Will this person fit in with the team I already have in place?
- 6) Why does this person want to work for our organization?

Being able to address these questions will likely require you to research the organization and be familiar with the position description and qualifications before writing your letter.

Can I use the same cover letter when submitting a resume to different organizations?

No, you should individualize each cover letter to the position and organization. **NOTE:** Cover letters are not required when you attend job fairs, on-campus interviews and some personal contacts.

When submitting a cover letter via email, attach it as a pdf or Word document; do not include it in the body of your email. Use the email to briefly introduce yourself, express your interest in the position and reference the attached documents (cover letter, resume).

What five tips will benefit a job seeker most when writing a cover letter?

- 1) Your cover letter is a writing sample. Employers look for clear, concise and persuasive writing with perfect grammar, spelling and punctuation.
- 2) Present yourself in the best light, but don't exaggerate or inflate your skills, experiences and activities.

- 3) Proofread, proofread, proofread! Ask someone with proofreading skills you trust to read over your cover letter. Take it to the Writing Center.
- 4) Demonstrate specific knowledge of the organization. Research the employer and reference something unique about the organization in your letter and why you want to work for them.
- 5) Focus on the skills and qualifications you bring to the position. Employers will invest in on-the-job training, if they can see you are able to communicate effectively; show leadership and teamwork skills; have personal traits, such as the ability to adapt to change, be responsible and take initiative. And you can't just state this, you must show you have skills by citing examples.

Cover Letter Preparation and Format

The recommended length of the cover letter is approximately 200 words and three to four paragraphs. Always limit the letter to one page and address your cover letter to a specific person if possible.



Employers engage in a “town hall debate” related to employability at the Hart Career Center’s Annual Kick-Off Event. “The Great Debate” brought together local employers and students to learn about networking, resume prep, interviewing and more.



Your Address
 Your City, State, Zip Code
 The Date

You can “brand yourself” by using same header from your resume if desired

Employer Representative Name
 Title
 Organization Name
 Street or P.O. Box Number
 City, State, Zip Code

Dear Ms. (or Mr.) Representative Name:

- Paragraph 1** → **Reveal your purpose for writing**, identifying the position for which you are applying, your source of information, and the name of someone familiar to the organization, if you were referred by them. Strong transition sentence to the next paragraph.
- Paragraph 2** → **Focus on what you can do for the company, school or organization.** Base this on your skills, education and experience without restating your resume. Feature two or three specifics from your past experience that might positively impress the employer. Write these qualifications in a bulleted section or sentence format. Acknowledge your connection to skills or experiences mentioned in the job post.
- Paragraph 3** → **Discuss your knowledge of the organization.** Incorporate recent industry information and specific information about the position/organization.
- Paragraph 4** → **Indicate what steps you will take from here**, e.g., calling to follow-up on the application process and provide your phone number. Show appreciation to the reader for the time and consideration given to your letter and resume.

Sincerely,

(signature)

Sarah Student

Enclosure

- ▶ Spell check and proofread your letter! Remember to sign it.
- ▶ Print the letter and resume on matching resume paper and mail in a matching envelope.
- ▶ If applying electronically, save as a pdf or word document and attach to brief email with resume.
- ▶ Keep track of the correspondence you mail or email and follow-up as you have indicated.