Sample Cover Letter Format

Your Contact Information (Times New Roman font, 11-12 point)
Name
Address
City, State, Zip Code
Phone Number
Email Address

Date

Employer Contact Information (if you have it)
Name
Title
Company
Address
City, State, Zip Code

Salutation
Dear Mr./Ms. Last Name, (or Dear Hiring Manager or similar, if you cannot find a contact)

Body of Cover Letter - The body of your cover letter lets the employer know what position you are applying for, why the employer should select you for an interview, and how you will follow-up.

First Paragraph: Introduce yourself and state why you’re writing; you are enthusiastically presenting yourself for a job, and your background makes you the best candidate. List a referral source if possible.

Middle Paragraph(s): List your value to the company. Describe how you will contribute to the company from Day One. This should be based on research of the company and job. Share knowledge of the company’s goals, accomplishments and opportunities. Remember, you are interpreting your resume, not repeating it.

Final Paragraph: Call to action. Ask for the interview and state when (exactly) you will follow up.

Complimentary Close

Respectfully yours,

Signature

Handwritten Signature (for a mailed letter)

Typed Signature
Write a Cover Letter That Will Get an Employer’s Attention

When it comes to applying for a job, your cover letter is the gateway in terms of getting a hiring manager intrigued enough to click on your resume. However, that gateway is often filled with a ton of roadblocks — caused by you. Here are six ways to make sure your cover letter gets the attention it deserves:

1. Get the Name Right

You know how much you hate it when Starbucks baristas misspell your name? Not surprisingly, the people reading your cover letters hate it when you get their names wrong, too.

Take the time to make sure that the HR contact's name is spelled McCarthy — not MacCarthy. Is it Mr. Alex Meyer or Ms. Alex Meyer? (If you don't know, find out.) Type the person's name into LinkedIn and make sure to get it right.

Also, if it's a job@company.com email address, go the extra step to determine who the actual hiring manager is and address the cover letter to him or her. Never write “To whom it may concern.” It concerns Mary Adler, Hiring Manager at Accosta Accounting. She'll appreciate the research.

2. Keep It Personal

Stop copy-and-pasting your form cover letter. Hiring managers see right through this lazy attempt at career searching. Your defense that the companies are all alike? Well, that might be the case, but your job as an applicant is to highlight why each and every company you apply to is “the one.” That means making the cover letter as personalized as possible.

3. Research Who You Are Emailing

Study the person's career and mention it in the cover letter, if applicable. For instance, “I read your recent article... admire your career... loved the product launch you worked on...” Everyone likes hearing a little bit of praise.

4. Connect the Dots

Your cover letter is the key to getting into the front door of an employer. This is your opportunity to tell your story and help HR understand your career. Do you want to make the move from PR professional to journalist? This is the place to explain that. No need to rehash your resumé. Instead, focus on a strategic career story that will align you with the job in question.

5. Fight the Urge to Ramble

It starts out as an extra sentence or two, but when you're done, you've created a short story instead of a cover letter. Save some mystery for the interview. The person reading your cover letter is busy — and chances are so are you. Don't waste anyone's time with a rambling cover letter.

6. Keep It Short

Three paragraphs is a good length. I've seen cover letters that are a bit longer and a tad shorter, but it all comes back to the quality of the words. No need to start off with, “My name is ______.” Chances are they'll be able to tell that from your email address and signature. And if you aren't a recent graduate, there's no need to highlight the school you attended, either.

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