A cover letter is often the first document that an employer sees. It establishes the tone for the rest of your application.

**Rule #1**
Always write your own cover letter.
A cover letter conveys your ability to effectively communicate *in your own voice*.
Use your cover letter to highlight your qualifications for the role and to express your interest in the organization.

**Rule #2**
Never reuse a cover letter.
Instead, customize and tailor your document to each role and organization.
Be purposeful about describing why you want to work at *this* organization, in *this* role, and what you have to offer.

### The What, When, and Who:

**What** is an ideal cover letter?
- Addressed to an individual or to a role (see “Who”)
- Tailored to a specific job or internship role
- Limited to one page in length
- Written in a conversational-yet-professional style with short sentences

**When** should I submit it?
- When it is requested...
- When it is optional or recommended...
- When there is no mention...

*Unless the employer explicitly states they do not want a cover letter, you should submit one!*

**Who** might read a cover letter?
- Recruiter
- Hiring manager
- The interview team or hiring/selection/search committee

**What** are the benefits?
- Expresses your enthusiasm
- Adds narrative to your resume
- Demonstrates your communication skills
- Makes your application more personable

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**Does your cover letter sound like a form letter?** Recruiters can tell in an instant if it has been written for general use. Application materials are an indicator of your interest level. Make sure your cover letter sounds like you wrote it with this specific role in mind.
Your Present Address
City, State Zip Code

Date

Name of Hiring Manager
Job title of Hiring Manager
Organization Name
Street Address or P.O. Box
City, State Zip Code

Dear Dr. Last Name/ First & Last Name/ Hiring Manager/ Selection Committee:

First paragraph: Why are you writing? Let them know what role you are applying for at their organization. Share why you’re interested in working in this role at this organization. Transition with how you meet their qualifications.

Middle paragraphs: Take the next paragraph (or two) to provide examples of the major areas that you introduced in the paragraph above. Do not repeat your resume; highlight the most important/relevant pieces.

Your resume documents your accomplishments; your cover letter provides an avenue to add narrative that explains why your experience has prepared you for this position — to connect the dots for the reader.

Last paragraph: Reiterate your interest. Focus on how you can meet the employer’s needs rather than on what the position will do for you. Then, let them know that you would be excited to speak with them about this opportunity (avoid being presumptuous). Without using exclamation points, show some enthusiasm. Let them know the best ways to reach you and thank them for their time.

Sincerely,

(your signature in blue or black ink)

Full name typed

AVOID OVERUSED WORDS SUCH AS “PASSION,” “ASSET,” OR “TEAM PLAYER”

Instead...
...describe which part of the role excites you the most!
...offer an example of how you demonstrate your perseverance.
...share how you engage with the world around you.
Let’s Tweak that Line...

Language and tone go a long way towards getting your desired point across. Take a look at some of these examples to learn more about how messages come across.

**EXAMPLES:**

- "I don’t like writing cover letters and you don’t like reading them.”
- "I will call your office in a week to schedule an interview.”
- "It is presumptuous to assume they will want you to interview—it should always be up to the hiring manager to offer an interview.

**Instead, try something like...**

- "I welcome the opportunity to speak with you about how I can contribute to reaching the goals of Our Kids Are Awesome with my experience in developing educational curriculum.”

**The Difference?**
You take yourself seriously and as a hiring manager, I respect that.

**The Difference?**
As a hiring manager, that would pique my interest. You are offering a specific skill set that our program needs. You express interest in an interview without pressuring me.

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**TIP:** Write a thoughtful cover letter. Convince your reader why you’re a good fit.

**COVER LETTER CHECKLIST**

- Written uniquely for this job, using your own voice
- Addresses your interest in the position and employer
- Provides narrative for 2-3 important qualifications
- One page in length
- Error-free and typo-free
- Focuses on the needs of the employer (rather than your own)
- Does not mention any lack of experience or skills (let them decide if you have what they need)

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**NOTES**