

You are not a
ROBOT.
Don't sound
like one.



KEY POINTS

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

CAREER ADVISOR

TIP:

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.

THE ANATOMY OF A COVER LETTER

PERSONALIZE:

Use resources such as LinkedIn or Glassdoor to determine the name of the primary recruiter for the role.

If the primary recruiter or hiring manager is unclear, using general titles is acceptable.

WOW THEM WITH A GOOD OPENER:

"After learning of XYZ's commitment to sustainability and innovation in the technology field, I'm excited to apply for the role of [entry-level role]."

CONTENT:

- Mention **how** you meet the requirements for the role, the organization, and the industry.
- Use the job description as your guide, but also take time to research the organization to gain insight into their culture and operation that may be relevant to your application.
- Proofread; read aloud to ensure it makes sense and flows well.

WRAP UP:

- Remind your reader why you are a good fit and restate your interest in the organization.
- End on a cordial note.
- Express your interest in speaking with them further about your qualifications.

Your Present Address
City, State Zip Code

Date

Name of individual
Job title of individual
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

FORMATTING:

- Business letter, left-aligned, no indent per paragraph
- Keep to 1 page — Use 1/2 to 2/3 of a page for your narrative (from the start of the first paragraph to the end of the last paragraph)
- Match this document with your resume's font style and size

CAREER ADVISOR

TIP:

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.

the NUTS & BOLTS

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."

A sense of humor can be hard to read correctly in a cover letter and can leave an impression that doesn't accurately describe your character, talents, or potential.



It is presumptuous to assume they will want you to interview—it should always be up to the hiring manager to offer an interview.

CAREER ADVISOR

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

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.

COVER LETTER CHECKLIST

- Written uniquely for this job
- 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)
- _____
- _____

NOTES