

# Cover Letters

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## ***Purpose of a Cover Letter***

Whenever you send out a resume, a cover letter must accompany it. The purpose of the letter is to personalize your resume for this employer and position, and enable you to elaborate more fully on your qualifications.

## ***What should a cover letter entail?***

All cover letters should be unique but most have three parts: introduction, body and closing. The introduction and closing should each be one paragraph while the body can be one or two paragraphs.

## ***Introduction***

State why you are writing and why you are interested in this particular employer. This will require researching employers and exploring more than just their websites. Name the position for which you are applying and how you heard of the opening. If you are writing as a result of a personal referral, someone known to the reader, state it in the first sentence. Be sure you have that person's permission to use her/his name! The first paragraph must attract enough attention to make the employer want to read on. Find examples of opening lines in the Becker Career Center library.

## ***Body***

In the second and possibly third paragraphs, communicate the way your skills and experiences can be of value to this particular employer. Present the most relevant information you want the employer to consider. This is the section where you must sell yourself and your abilities. Balance confidence with humility. Think of what the employer needs to know about you. Paint a picture of the type of person they want to hire by describing how your experience relates or is transferable to that employer. Find examples in the Becker Career Center library.

## ***Closing***

Here you should indicate the next step you will take. This can include reasserting your interest in the position and arranging for a specific day/week when you will contact the employer to set up a meeting. Avoid endings which lack assertiveness such as "Please contact me..." Don't leave the initiative up to the employer. Write your letter as though you expect the meeting to occur. Since you should be sending letters to a small number of employers (approximately 6 to 8) at any one time, you should be able to do enough research and to follow up with all employers receiving your letters. Always thank the person, i.e. "Thank you for your consideration. I look forward to speaking with you soon." Find examples of closing statements in the Becker Career Center library.

## ***General Tips for All Letters***

- **Make your letter look graphically pleasing.**
  - Print on good quality stationary to match your resume.
- **Make it perfect.**
  - No typos, no misspellings, no factual errors.
- **Keep a copy of every letter you send out.**
  - When making follow-up phone call, it is helpful to have a copy of your letter to them.
- **Send the letter to the appropriate person.**
  - Find out who is in charge of the department or division of interest, and send your letter to them. Do not hesitate to call the company directly to find out the name (and correct spelling!) and title of the person in charge.

## SAMPLE COVER LETTER

Your Street Address  
City, ST Zip  
Today's Date

Mr./Ms. First and Last Name of Employer  
Title of Employer  
Company/Organization  
Street Address  
City, ST Zip

Dear Mr./Ms. Last Name of Employer:

Your opening paragraph tells **why you are writing** and notes where you learned about the opening or if someone referred you. Be as specific as possible about the kind of position for which you are applying. Do some research so that you can state your interest in this particular employer.

Your middle paragraph(s) should **highlight your qualifications**. Give details of your background that will show the reader why she/he should consider you as a candidate. If you have had relevant experience or related education, be sure to point it out, but do not duplicate your resume. By using examples, show the employer that you have the necessary skills they seek.

You could have another paragraph here to go into **more experience** that will highlight your qualifications. For a concluding sentence, summarize the skills and personal traits that you would bring to the job for which you are applying. Do this in a confident manner. Also, remember that the reader will view your letter as an example of your writing skills.

In your closing paragraph, **describe the follow-up action you will take**. State that you will be contacting the employer within a particular time to set up an interview at his/her convenience (unless you know that calls are not appropriate in this case). A positive request is harder to ignore than a vague hope. You might refer them to your enclosed resume and any other materials. Thank them for their time and consideration.

Sincerely,

(sign your name)

Your name (typed)

Enclosure