



COW CREEK CAREER CENTER

Cover Letter Guide



2371 NE Stephens St.,
Suite #100
Roseburg, OR 97470
Phone: (541) 677-5575
Fax: (541) 677-5574

Email: info-workforce@cowcreek.com

Send a Cover Letter with your Resume!

Always write a cover letter when sending your resume to a prospective employer. While your resume shows that you are qualified for a position, a cover letter explains why you are the best fit for the job. It gives you an opportunity to provide specific examples of your abilities.

Cover letters should be brief and to the point. You should explain why you are interested in the job, state your qualifications, and request an interview. You should also rewrite your cover letter for each job you apply for. Potential employers can often tell when a letter is just a copy from another publication, and may treat it as junk mail.

Proofread your cover letter very carefully, and have a friend review it as well. Format the letter using a letter template in Word or other computer program. Print your cover letter on the same high quality paper as your resume.

A cover letter usually consists of the address and content. The content, the actual text of the letter, should be written in three parts. Each part should only be one brief paragraph.

Address

Your contact information followed by the date is the first item on the letter, near the top of the page, on the left side. The employer contact information should follow.

Whenever possible, your letters should be addressed to a specific person by name. You may need to contact the employer, search the company's website, or reread the job posting carefully to find the person's name. It may be a hiring manager, the business owner, or the head of the department. You can also call the employer and ask the receptionist or secretary who answers the phone.

Be absolutely sure you have the spelling of the person's name correct, and double check the company's name and address as well. If you aren't sure from the person's name whether they are a man or a woman, be sure to ask. You will want to address the person formally, using Ms. for women and Mr. for men.

Introduction

State the job you are applying for and explain your reasons for applying in this first paragraph. Perhaps you want to further the mission of the organization, or you believe you are the best possible candidate for the position.

If you and the person you are writing to have met before at a job fair or other event, mention that contact in this paragraph as well.

Middle

Use this paragraph to share your main qualifications and accomplishments. Relate these to the job you are applying for, and explain why they make you the best person for the job. Focus on two or three qualifications that set you apart. Your resume will demonstrate your other qualifications. For each skill, explain where you used it and how it would be helpful to the employer.

Closing

Request an interview in the last paragraph. Restate your interest in the company or organization and the job. Thank them for taking the time to review your application, and express your interest in coming in for an interview.



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TIPS!

1. Avoid generic salutations. Show that you've done your research by always using the hiring manager's name in the salutation of your cover letter, not a generic "Dear Sir" or "To whom it may concern." Many company web sites, as well as LinkedIn, feature biographical info on recruiters or hiring managers, so it's easy to find contacts these days.

2. Never use the same cover letter to apply for multiple jobs. Each cover letter should be specially geared toward landing one particular position at one particular company. Consequently, it needs to emphasize the aspects of your education, personality, skills, and experience that make you the best candidate for the job. Make the employer feel special by demonstrating your enthusiasm for the firm and your knowledge of its recent activities. You could say something like, "I have followed your company since I was in college, and I am very impressed with XYZ strategy or your LBO of XYZ company. I would love the chance to become part of your team and play a significant role in future acquisitions."

3. Skip the generic recitation of skills. If the job listing asks for a detail-oriented analyst with leadership ability, for example, don't just repeat these words, but provide short examples of how they apply to you. For example, detail-oriented = "In college, I organized a financial career seminar with 20 speakers and 500 attendees," and leadership skills = "I served as vice president of my college's MBA Student Private Equity Club."

4. But use keywords that match those listed in the job announcement. For example, if you're applying for an analyst position that requires a master's degree in quantitative finance, then your résumé or cover letter should include the terms "master's degree" and "quantitative finance." If you don't use keywords that match the job listing, you run the risk of your submission being ignored by cover letter/resume-scanning software.

5. Avoid using industry jargon. Some people who review your application materials may be unfamiliar with industry lingo. To avoid using jargon, McKinsey advises applicants to "ask friends from different backgrounds to read your resume/curriculum vita and point out any areas that sound confusing."

6. Keep it short and well-organized. "Organization and brevity are just as important in [your cover letter] as in your resume," advises Bank of America. "Put yourself in the recruiters' shoes: they will see hundreds of cover letters. Prioritize your points, cover each one in order, and do not dwell on any of them."



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7. Your cover letter needs to be error free. Errors suggest that you're not detail oriented and don't take the job-search process seriously. With so many people vying for each position, one simple mistake on your cover letter or resume could disqualify you from consideration. Avoid this fate by proofreading your documents multiple times and also having trusted friends or a career counselor at your college review them.

8. Don't lie. No firm wants to hire someone whom they can't trust. If you become a serious candidate for the job, your credentials will be examined closely, and being caught in a lie will, in most cases, disqualify you from consideration for the position you're seeking. Also note: many firms conduct background checks and investigate statements you make on your application materials.

9. Use the cover letter to demonstrate your excellent communication skills. Many job listings mention these skills as an important quality for a candidate. So use clear, concise language, and mix in a little of your personality. Shorter is better; you need to grab HR managers' attention quickly by providing compelling reasons why you should be hired. Proofread your cover letter until it's perfect. Then ask at least two other people to review your document as well.

10. Use numbers and hard data. In addition to interpersonal, communication, and other types of skills, you might also want to mention your high GPA, or provide other hard data that's applicable. Numbers stand out and are easy to remember.

11. Follow the rules. If the job description says your cover letter should feature the job listing number and be submitted digitally only, you need to do this. Failure to follow the rules suggests that you're not detail oriented and not good at following instructions, and thus not a good candidate for the job.

<https://www.vault.com/blogs/resumes-cover-letters/11-essential-cover-letter-tips>