

# Cover Letters



## What is a cover letter? What should it do?

Cover letters are frequently used in combination with your resume as part of an application for a job position or admittance to a school or program. Usually they should be fairly short, around a page or less, and address questions such as: Why are you a good candidate for the position? What do you know about the organization? What can you bring to the organization that no one else can?

Cover letters are therefore an excellent opportunity to let your voice be heard. They let you directly address the person or people who will be evaluating your application and make an implicit argument that you are the best person for the position.

## How can you get started with your cover letter?

- Find out **who the letter should be addressed to**. Usually this person will be the individual in charge of hiring or the director of the program. If it is not clear from the job or program description who this is, you might want to do some digging around on the institution's website or email a contact person to get the details if need be.
- **Examine the job position description and consult the company or school's mission statement/ statement of purpose.** These two statements will give you a very good indication of the values, skills, and characteristics that the institution prioritizes. This can also be a good place to find some "buzz words" to use in your letter. For example, if the job description and mission statement mention academic excellence, it would be a good idea to mention some experiences or awards that illustrate your academic excellence in your cover letter.
- **Reflect** on how your qualities, experiences, and skills that line up with or contribute to the company's goals.

---

## Cover Letters

---

- **Reflect** on how your qualities, experiences, and skills that line up with or contribute to the company's goals.
- If there is **someone you know who has also worked for that company/ gone to that school**, they can offer some good insight about what the institution wants to see from potential candidates
- **Your resume.** While you don't want to simply repeat the experiences, honors, and skills that you list on your resume, the cover letter can be a great place to highlight some of those experiences that are particularly relevant.

### **What are some common features and conventions of a cover letter?**

- Address the letter to someone specific if possible—a contact person at the company. Use their full name if you do not know their gender or do not want to include gender.
- State the purpose of the letter and summarize what you can offer to the employer in the first paragraph.
- Highlight experiences and qualifications in the body of your letter that will attract your employer. Use the space of the cover letter to expound on things that you weren't able to address fully in your resume.
- End by thanking the employer and include with a valediction (i.e., Sincerely).