



A **COVER LETTER** is a one-page document submitted as part of a job application. It complements your resume or CV, it is more personalized, and it targets a given position. A well-written cover letter commands the reader's attention and stimulates the employer's interest in you as a potential candidate.

PURPOSE

Demonstrate Interest: A cover letter shows your enthusiasm for the specific job opportunity and organization, as well as offers a glimpse into who you are as an individual.

Highlight Experience: Your cover letter brings the employer's focus to select aspects of your background that best suit the position and the employer's needs. It expands on the skills and experiences in your resume and explains how those aspects make you a great candidate for the job.

Secure an Interview: Along with your resume, the ultimate goal of your cover letter is to secure an interview.

GUIDELINES

Instructions: Make sure you follow the employer's instructions for submitting your application materials. If submitting your materials electronically, send the documents in the format the employer requests, if not stated send as a PDF.

Salutation: Your letter will be more effective if addressed to a specific person within the organization. If you do not know the person's name and title, research them via LinkedIn or on the company's site. If you are unable to get a specific name, "Dear Search Committee" or "Dear Hiring Manager" are acceptable alternatives.

Employer-Focused: Research the organization before you write your cover letter. Each cover letter should be original/unique and targeted to the specific position. Use information obtained through research to demonstrate that you are knowledgeable about the company. Share what you know about the employer and how you may be the solution for the problem they are trying to solve. Do not overuse personal pronouns like "I", "me," and "my", as this may appear self-serving. Rather, highlight the results and outcomes of your work and how they can benefit the employer.

Business Professional Format: The professional image you want to give to a prospective employer includes a neatly typed and grammatically correct letter. No typos! The letter should also be well-organized and visually appealing. The reader will judge you on your communication skills, so do your best to tell your story effectively. Use an acceptable business format (see sample). Select a sans serif font (like Calibri, Arial, or Helvetica) as they are easier to read on a screen; use the same font as your resume.

Experience and Accomplishments: A cover letter should communicate your qualifications and motivation for the role and industry by highlighting your experiences. Show how previous accomplishments relate to the position for which you are applying and how your skills will meet the employer's needs. Use active verbs to demonstrate your proactive approach. For example, use "arranged...", "designed...", "evaluated...", instead of "was responsible for arranging...", "...designing...", "...evaluating...".

Stay Positive: Focus on skills/abilities that make you unique, rather than qualifications you lack. Avoid expressing dissatisfaction with a present or former job/employer, including negative reasons for leaving your last job.



COVER LETTER FORMAT

A cover letter usually includes four distinct elements, which can be designed in four paragraphs.

FIRST PARAGRAPH - *The Greeting*

Draw in the reader, capture their attention, set the tone, and state your purpose, that is what's included in the first paragraph. A well-crafted opening paragraph can grab the reader's attention, which is particularly important as they may be reviewing numerous applications. A compelling first paragraph can significantly increase your chances of being noticed and considered for the position, ultimately improving your prospects of securing an interview.

Below are possible approaches:

- *A Personal Contact:* "Margaret Hamilton suggested I contact you regarding ..."
- *Specific Company Knowledge:* "I read a recent story concerning Champion Corporation's contribution to the carbon neutrality of..."
- *A Sincere Compliment/Reputation:* "A colleague of mine has told me of your excellent reputation..."
- *General Interest:* "My goal is to be part of a strong IT team, like the one at Champion Corporation..."

SECOND PARAGRAPH - *Knowledge of Employer*

Research the organization, identify areas that appeal to you, and discuss your interest in them. Exemplify how their goals and mission align with your own.

For instance, you can begin the paragraph with similar language to:

- "Your organization interests me because ..."
- "Your organization's efforts to _____ attract me because ..."
- "In researching the _____ Company, I was thrilled to see that..."
- "I have fond memories of exploring the outdoors with my grandmother, and still have the boots..."

THIRD PARAGRAPH - *Relevant Skills and Qualifications*

Share with the employer why you are a strong candidate for the position and how you intend to contribute to the organization. Use the job description to assist you by highlighting relevant achievements, skills, and/or experiences. Mention the most interesting points on your resume that align with the position.

Examples include:

- "The position of _____ would allow me to"
- "My skills, qualifications, and experience include ..."
- "The experience I have gained in the accounting field ..."

FOURTH PARAGRAPH - *The Closing*

The closing paragraph is positive and action-oriented. Restate your interest, propose a meeting to discuss the position and your skills, state how they may contact you with questions, and thank them for their consideration. End the letter with a closing salutation and your name.

- "I look forward to discussing my experience and qualifications with you. If you have any questions regarding my candidacy, please contact me at _____. Thank you for your time and consideration."
- "I welcome the opportunity to meet with you to discuss how I can contribute to your organization. Please feel free to contact me at _____ to set up a time to meet or if you have any questions. I appreciate your consideration."



Career & Employment Hub

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May 30, 2024

Sally Employer
Director, Marketing and Communication
Best Organization Ever
Anywhere, ME 01010

Dear Sally Employer,

In a recent conversation with Professor Champion, my advisor at the University of Southern Maine, I learned about Best Organization Ever and its stellar reputation. With a background in digital marketing and a degree in Communication and Media Studies, I am excited to express my interest in the Digital Marketing Specialist position at your esteemed company.

What draws me to Best Organization Ever are your values of connecting with the larger Maine community and fostering employee engagement. These principles resonate with me deeply. Additionally, I am impressed by your strong product line and the need for enhanced social media presence—a domain where I excel. Your consistent recognition as one of the Best Places to Work in Maine further solidifies my desire to join your team.

Your job description specifies a need for a passionate online branding expert experienced in designing social media campaigns and tracking analytics. My journey with social media began in high school, and it has since evolved into a professional focus. During my recent internship with Rock Star Company, I was responsible for designing, implementing, and maintaining their online presence. I produced analytics using Google Analytics, which informed presentations to senior staff. My academic projects have addressed real-world problems for local companies, providing me with diverse industry insights. As a community-minded individual, I have volunteered with a nonprofit organization addressing food insecurity, where I developed an online fundraising campaign. My experience spans various online platforms and tools, including YouTube, Instagram, TikTok, Facebook, Canva, Google Analytics, and Hootsuite.

I am eager to discuss how my skills and experiences align with the Digital Marketing Specialist role at Best Organization Ever. Please feel free to contact me at shusky@maine.edu or (207) 780-5555 with any questions regarding my application. Thank you for considering my application. I look forward to the possibility of contributing to your team.

Sincerely,

Sam Husky