



A **COVER LETTER** is a one-page document submitted as part of a job application. It complements your résumé 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 offering 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 skills and experience in your résumé and explains how those aspects make you a great candidate for the job.

Secure an Interview: Along with your résumé, 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 (or PDF).

Research: Investigate 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.

Business Professional Format: 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 résumé.

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 Human Resources Department" are acceptable alternatives.

Active Language: Use active verbs instead of passive language. For example, use "arranged...", "designed...", "evaluated...", instead of "was responsible for arranging...", "...designing...", "...evaluating...".

Experience and Accomplishments: A cover letter should communicate your qualifications and motivation for the role and industry through 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.

Employer Focused: 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.

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.

Appearance: 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.



COVER LETTER FORMAT

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

1. The Greeting
2. Knowledge of the Employer
3. Relevant Skills and Qualifications
4. The Closing

FIRST PARAGRAPH - *The Greeting*

Draw in the reader with an opening paragraph that captures their attention and explain why you are writing the letter. State your purpose by *identifying the position for which you are applying* and how you learned about the vacancy.

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

Within this paragraph, tailor your cover letter to a particular job. 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 experience. Mention the most interesting points on your résumé without repeating all the language within it.

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 the next point of contact to discuss the position and your skills, state how they may contact you with questions, and thank them for the 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."



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October 15, 2023

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

Dear Sally Employer,

It is with great enthusiasm that I write to express my interest in the position of Digital Marketing Specialist at the Best Organization Ever. Professor Sam Champion, my advisor at the University of Southern Maine who has also worked with you, recommended I apply to this role. I have several years of varied digital marketing experience and will be graduating soon with a bachelor's degree in communication and media studies.

Your organization is of particular interest to me due to several factors. Based on your website, Best Organization Ever's values appear to align with mine regarding connecting with the larger Maine community and enabling employee engagement with others. In addition, you have a strong product and seek support in better leveraging social media platforms, a specialty of mine. A third reason is that your organization has an outstanding reputation in the community, punctuated by your continued placement on the Best Place to Work in Maine list.

In the job description, you mention that you are looking for a candidate with a passion for online branding who has experience with designing social media campaigns, including tracking analytics. Since I was in middle school, I have had an interest in social media platforms, and gained my first experiences at that time. I recently completed an internship with the Rock Star Company, where I oversaw designing, implementing, and maintaining their online presence. As part of my role, I produced analytics for their online platforms using Google Analytics, which were used for presentations with senior staff. My classes have also included projects that targeted "real-life" problems in local companies where I was able to gain insights into several industries. As a community-minded individual, I have been a volunteer at a non-profit organization serving those with food insecurity; in addition to working directly with clients, I helped develop an online campaign to raise funds for the organization. I have experience with numerous online platforms and technology, including YouTube, Instagram, TikTok, Facebook, Canva, Google Analytics, and Hootsuite.

I look forward to further exploring the Digital Marketing Specialist position with you. Should you have any questions about my application, please feel free to contact me at shusky@maine.edu or (207) 780-5555. Thank you for your time and consideration of my application.

Sincerely,

Sam Husky