

# Cover Letter

## PURPOSE & CONTENT

### PURPOSE

- **Highlight Experience:** It highlights selective aspects of your background which best suit the employer's needs. It bridges the gap and/or expands on your skills and experience and the qualifications of the position.
- **Capture Attention:** A well written cover letter commands the reader's attention, and stimulates the employer's interest in you as a potential candidate.
- **Demonstrate Interest:** It reflects your interest in the specific job opportunity or the organization as a whole.
- **Secure an Interview:** The opportunity to interview is the ultimate goal of your cover letter and résumé.

### CONTENT

- **Business Professional Format:** Be sure to use an acceptable business format (*see sample*). Send the original, and be sure you keep a copy of each letter for your records.
- **Appearance:** Keep in mind that the professional image you want to give to the prospective employer includes a neatly typed, grammatically correct and accurate letter. **NO TYPOS!**
- **Salutation:** Your letter will be more effective when you address the letter to a specific person within the organization. If you don't know the person's name, title, or gender, call the organization and ask for the correct information. If you are unable to get a specific name, then using "Dear Search Committee" or "Dear Human Resources Department" are acceptable alternatives.
- **Active Language:** Use active, not passive, verbs. For example, use "arranged...," "devised...," "evaluated...," instead of "was responsible for arranging...," "...devising...," "...evaluating..."
- **Employer Focused:** Don't overuse the word "I." Starting every sentence with "I" can give the wrong impression, and you may come across as self-centered. Rather than starting with "I," turn some of your sentences around. It's better to give examples of how you did something than to say, "I did..." this or that.
- **Research:** Research the organization before you write the cover letter. Ideally, each cover letter is unique and targeted to a specific position. Use the information obtained through research to demonstrate that you know something about the company. Each time you submit a résumé for a specific position it should be accompanied by an original cover letter.
- **Accomplishments:** A cover letter should communicate your ambition and enthusiasm. Stress your accomplishments by explaining how you have met specific employer needs. Show how previous accomplishments relate to the position for which you are applying. Also, the reader may judge you on how well you write; do your best to make the words come alive!
- **Stay Positive:** Never express dissatisfaction with a present or former job or employer. Be sure to avoid discussing any negative reasons for leaving your last job.
- **Instructions:** Make sure you follow the employer's instructions for submitting your application materials. If submitting your materials electronically, save the documents into the format the **employer requests**.

# Cover Letter

## SECTIONS

A cover letter usually includes three to four paragraphs. Each paragraph has a different goal.

**First Paragraph “The Greeting”:** This opening paragraph should grab the reader attention and explain why you are writing the letter. State your purpose; identify the position for which you are applying and how you learned about the opening. Here are three possible techniques...

- A Personal Contact: “Margaret Hamilton suggested I contact you regarding ...”
- Specific Company Knowledge: “I read the article concerning Champion Corporation’s use of modern organization...”
- A Sincere Compliment: “A colleague of mine has told me of your excellent reputation...”

**Second Paragraph “Knowledge of Employer” (optional):** Having researched the company this paragraph gives you an opportunity to discuss your interest in the company. How their goals and mission align with your own.

- “Your company interests me because ...”
- “Your company’s efforts to \_\_\_\_\_ attracted me because ...”

**Third Paragraph “Your Skills”:** It is within this paragraph that you tailor your résumé to a particular job. Tell the employer why you are a strong candidate for this position- use the job description to assist you. Highlight relevant achievements, skills, and/or experience, mentioning the most interesting points on your résumé. Explain how you intend to help the employer and contribute to the organization.

- “The position of \_\_\_\_\_ would allow me to ...”
- “My qualifications and experience include ...”
- “The experience I have gained in the accounting field ...”

**Fourth Paragraph “The Closing”:** This paragraph should be action-oriented. Express your interest in connecting with the employer to further discuss the position and/or your skills. Also, be sure to state how and when they may contact you. Do not assume an employer will contact you once you have sent your cover letter and résumé. It is your responsibility to follow up. Finally, thank the individual and mention that you are looking forward to meeting him or her.

- I look forward to discussing my experience and qualifications with you ...
- I will be in Caribou during the week of ...
- I will be contacting you ...

# Cover Letter

SAMPLE

RETURN  
ADDRESS:

Lester Woodman  
77 Sunset Drive  
Portland, Maine 04103  
LesterW@gmail.com

Use the same information as you use for your résumé.

May 14, 2015

If you do not know if the contact is a man or a woman use Dear and their full name:

If you absolutely cannot find a name of the person use Dear Hiring Manager: or Dear Selection Committee: not To Whom it May Concern:

INSIDE  
ADDRESS:

Mr. John Hanover, President  
WindPower Environmental Corporation  
618 Snowy River Road  
Caribou, Maine 04002

SALUTATION:

Dear Mr. Hanover:

BODY:

After researching WindPower Environmental Corporation, I understand your immediate goal is to improve business performance and establish key benchmarks within the sustainable energy industry. The Assistant Director of Operations position would be an excellent opportunity for me to continue my personal and professional interest in sustainable business while working for a respectable organization. Please accept my resume as application for the position.

On the WindPower Environmental Corporation website, I was intrigued by your recent work with turbine efficiency and the company's goal of providing an environmentally clean power solution to all. Given my professional achievements, I am in a position to help you quickly develop your goal, expand your business and assist in making a difference in this important industry.

The enclosed résumé outlines my two years' experience as a Coordinator of Volunteer Recruitment at the Maine Audubon Society and my work as a volunteer with the Appalachian Mountain Club for the past five years. My work at the Audubon Society involves managing our volunteers and their day-to-day responsibilities. My work also includes fundraising, editing a newsletter and publicity releases focusing on environmental issues and organization membership drives. In addition to my jobs, I am presently pursuing a Bachelor's of Science degree in Business Administration with a concentration in Sustainable Business at the University of Southern Maine and plan to graduate in May 2016. I have found that taking courses in management while working in an administrative position provides me with an excellent balance of practical experience and educational training.

My passion in this field is what motivates me and I welcome an opportunity to meet and discuss my qualifications in more detail. Please feel free to contact me at (207) 780-5555 if you have any questions about my resume and/or qualifications. Thank you for your time and consideration.

CLOSING:

Sincerely yours,

SIGNATURE:



Use your actual signature (scanned) vs. a typed one, if you can.

TYPED NAME:

Lester Woodman

ENCLOSURE:

Enc: Résumé

**Community Engagement & Career Development**

100 Payson Smith Hall, Portland Campus

(207) 228-8156 • [careers@usm.maine.edu](mailto:careers@usm.maine.edu)

<https://usm.maine.edu/community-engagement-career-development>