



University at Buffalo
The State University of New York

Career Services
Division of Student Affairs

Tips to Writing a Cover Letter

A cover letter is a necessary business letter that accompanies your resume whether you mail, email, or fax your resume. Its purpose is to introduce your resume, express your personality and enthusiasm for the position, and provide support for your candidacy that is not covered by your resume. Writing a cover letter can be a challenging and time-consuming task, especially when you must customize it towards each organization. The following suggestions are offered when writing a cover letter:

- Make sure that you type each letter using the same font and high quality paper as the resume.
- Use 1" margins all the way around, and put print on high quality resume paper (8 1/2" x 11") using a laser printer.
- Please be sure to proof your letter for grammar and spelling errors! It is a reflection of you! Have someone else proof it too!
- Be brief and concise; the cover letter should be approximately 1/2 page in length.
- Expand on your resume, rather than repeat the resumes content.
- Individualize and target each cover letter to the position you seek; recruiters can spot a mass produced or generic letter and will consider it unprofessional.
- Be sure to market yourself. Explain what you can offer the company; not what the company can do for you.
- Make sure to include a cover letter with your resume, whether it is mailed, emailed, or faxed!
- Remember to *sign* the cover letter.
- Three standard ways to close your cover letter.
 1. **Active Approach** – Indicate to the employer that you will be calling within a certain period of time (usually 7 days) to arrange a convenient time for an interview. Use tact, otherwise this approach may appear presumptuous.
 2. **Reserved Approach** – Express your desire for the employer to contact you. Feel free to contact the employer after a week to express your continued interest in the organization, and to see where they are in the review process.
 3. **Out-of-Town Approach** – mention the fact that you will be in the area during a certain time period and will call to arrange an interview before/after you arrive. You may request a specific time and date for an interview or indicate your availability at any time during a given period.

For more information on writing cover letters, be sure to check out Career Services, UB Career Guide or our website at www.ub-careers.buffalo.edu. Our staff members are also available to critique your letter. Set up an appointment by stopping in at 259 Capen Hall or call 645-2231.

The Cover Letter

Your Present Address
City, State Zip Code

Date

Name of Recruiter
Title of Recruiter
Name of Organization
Street Address
City, State Zip Code

Dear Mr./Ms. (Recruiter's last name):

1st Paragraph—Your opening paragraph should pique the interest of the potential employer. Tell why you are writing. Name the position, field or general vocational area about which you are asking. Tell how you learned of the opening or organization and why you are interested in the organization. Refer back to the previous page's suggestions.

2nd Paragraph—This paragraph should create a desire to read further. Provide additional information concerning your education, experience, qualities, and interests as they relate to the position. Describe one or two qualifications you think would be of the greatest interest to the employer, keeping in mind the employer's point of view. If you have related experience or special training, be sure to point it out. Tell the employer specifically what you have to offer the organization and support your claim with proof/examples.

3rd Paragraph—In your closing paragraph ask for action. Refer to the three standard ways to close your cover letter on the previous page. Be sure to emphasize your appreciation for their time.

Sincerely (or Respectfully),

(Your handwritten signature)

Type your name here

Enc. (to indicate that you have enclosed a resume and/or other material)

SAMPLE FORMATS FOR LETTERS

Cover Letter Model

Your Present Address
City, State, ZIP Code

Date of Writing

Name of Employer
Title of Employer
Name of Organization
Street Address
City, State, ZIP Code

Dear (Name): If you have done your research but cannot find the person's name, do not write "Dear Sir" or "Gentlemen." "Dear (name of company) Representative" is more appropriate.

First Paragraph - Tell why you are writing. Name the position, or field or general vocational area about which you are asking. Tell how you learned of the opening or organization, and why you are interested in the organization, or in the industry or field.

Middle Paragraph - Refer the reader to the enclosed resume, giving additional information concerning your background and interests. Demonstrate to the employer how your interests, education, and experience fit the job requirements. Describe one or two qualifications you think would be of greatest interest to the employer, keeping in mind the employer's point of view. If you have related experience or specialized training, be sure to point it out. Don't make the common mistake of saying, "I'd like a position so I can gain experience in my field"; show the employer what you will be able to do for the organization.

Last Paragraph - Close by making a specific request for an interview, and indicate that you would appreciate hearing from them at (phone number) to arrange an interview and learn more about the position. Make sure your closing is not vague, but suggests a specific action.

Sincerely yours,

(Your handwritten signature)

Type your name here

Enc. (If you enclose a resume or other materials)

Model Thank You Letter

Your Present Address
City, State, ZIP Code

Date of Writing

Name of Interviewer
Title of Interviewer
Name of Organization
Address
City, State, ZIP Code

Dear Name of Interviewer:

Paragraph 1: A statement thanking the interviewer, expressing your appreciation for the courtesy and consideration extended to you. Mention the position for which you interviewed, the date and place of the interview and include some reference to your conversation which will help the employer to remember you.

Paragraph 2: A reaffirmation of your interest. Mention anything you have done since the interview which shows your interest in the position. You could also comment on something specific about the position which came up during the interview.

Paragraph 3: An expression of your willingness to provide additional information. Include here, or enclose with the letter, any information requested at the interview.

Paragraph 4: A simple closing ending positively.

Sincerely,

(Your handwritten signature)

Type your name here

Enc. (If you enclose a resume or other materials)

Remember: Always use good quality 8½" x 11" bond paper and laser printer. If you use this format, indent paragraphs.

Additional Letters

You may occasionally have to write a letter for other reasons. Here is a list of other types of job searching letters.

- **Networking Letter:** This letter is used when you are requesting a meeting (not an interview) with an employer/professional for the purposes of research or information gathering. You are attempting to make a contact with that person. It is a letter similar to the cover letter in style and tone but shorter in details about your experience.
- **Prospecting Letter:** This letter is similar to the networking letter, but is more general in nature. You are writing to determine if there are vacancies within that organization.
- **Acceptance Letter:** This letter is used to accept a job offer. It should be relatively short and used to confirm the details (start date, salary, etc.) and to positively reinforce the employer's decision to hire you.
- **Withdrawal Letter:** It is your ethical obligation to inform the other prospective employers that you have accepted a position with another organization and that you are removing your name from consideration for their position. Be brief but be sure to express your thanks for their interest in you. Do not mention that you obtained a better job, but indicate that the position you accepted fits better with your personal and career needs.
- **Rejection Letter:** This letter is written if an employer has offered you a position and you are not going to accept it. Be brief but be sure to express your thanks for their interest in you. Remember that you may want a job with this employer at some point later in your career.