

Cover Letter Writing

Components of a cover letter

The Opening

This is where you tell employers

- who you are
- why you're writing
- how you heard about the organization or the specific opening

Who you are- Write a brief introduction of yourself. For example, "I am a senior at XYZ University graduating in May with a major in biology." Just mention the basic facts about you and your situation, choosing the ones that will be most relevant to the employer.

Why you are writing- mention the position you are applying for, or what your job objective is if you are not applying through a job advertisement.

Tell them how you heard about the organization or the job- You might say, "I came across the listing for a machine operator on the Monster.ca website.

Selling Yourself

List in paragraph or bullet form, the reasons why you are a good candidate for the position. Start with an overview of your qualifications and then go into them more specifically using examples. For example, "As a Human Resources major and intern for XYZ placement agency, I offer the following skills and accomplishments."

Research

Show the company you know something about their organization. Comment on something positive and let them know why you want to work there. You might mention the organization's reputation, size, and management style.

The Request for Further Action

The closing paragraph opens the door to further contact. It's fine to follow up your submission with a phone call, but only call once. When you do call, introduce yourself, indicate the position you applied for and reiterate your interest in the position.

Cover Letter Writing Tips

Structure and opening of the Letter

DO- Provide your name, phone number and address.

DO- Address your letter to the appropriate contact person, either the employer or a human resources officer. Use their name and title. If the ad doesn't supply a contact, **phone and get the right name.**

DON'T- Be vague. If you're replying to an advertisement, place the job title in your cover letter. The person reading your letter may be reviewing hundreds of letters for dozens of jobs.

DO- Refer to what the company does, and how your skills, abilities and experience can be a valuable addition to their team.

DON'T- Use a weak opening line. One of the hardest tasks is how to begin a cover letter. More often than not, the opening fails to grab the reader's interest. For example:

Weak: *Please consider me for your receptionist opening.*

Better: *Your need for a top-performing receptionist is an excellent match to my three-year history as a top-notch, highly organized administrator.*

DON'T- Make it too long or short. If your cover letter is only one or two short paragraphs, it probably doesn't contain enough key information to sell you effectively. Keep it concise but packed with information that makes a statement.

DO- Keep your letter to one page.

Body of the Letter

DON'T- Overuse "I." Your cover letter is not an autobiography. The focus should be on how you meet an employer's needs.

DON'T- Omit your major accomplishments. Give them reasons to call you for an interview. For example,

As your ad indicated, I offer:

- Communication Skills
- Five years of public speaking experience and an extensive background in executive-level report writing.
- Strong Computer Background Proficiency in all MS Office applications, with additional expertise in Web site development/design.

DO- Use industry keywords that are relevant to the job you are applying for in your cover letter.

Conclusion of the Letter

DO- Make sure the employer knows what action to take - will you call the employer or should the employer call you, and when?

DON'T- Forget to sign the letter. It is proper business etiquette to sign your letter. If you are sending your cover letter and resume via email or the Web, a signature is not necessary.

DO- Proof-read your letter, and ask someone else to read it as well and correct the errors.