

Cover letter 101

(sample cover letters included)

While your resume is the most important document you – the job seeker – will create, some may argue that the cover letter can at times be more challenging to write. That's because it's not just a bulleted list of accomplishments — it's an opportunity to show your personality; bring the words on your resume to life; and explain, through examples, why you're the best fit for the open position.

So, regardless of whether you're writing your very first cover letter – or your first one in years – here's the rundown on what to include. Bonus: Read through to the end to get your hands on some industry-specific examples.

Header

Similar to your resume, include a header with your name and contact information. List the phone number that you can most easily be reached at.

Salutation

If possible, avoid using the "To Whom It May Concern" salutation. Instead, do some investigative work to find the name of the person hiring for the position or the company recruiter. Look at the job posting, go to the company website and dig for names in the "About Us" section, or call the main line and ask. If your search turns up empty, another option is to use, "Dear hiring manager for [insert job] position."

First paragraph

Introduce some relevant background information and give a brief explanation for why you're the right fit for the position.

Example: *As an experienced public relations professional, I was excited to see the public relations manager opportunity at Company Q. I believe I am an ideal candidate for the position because of my strong background in corporate communications and crisis management.*

Second/third paragraph

Here's where you highlight specific examples and anecdotes that illustrate why you are qualified for the job. Just as you did in your resume, quantify your achievements when possible. It's also where you can show that you've done your research on the company by referencing something you found on their site or read about in an industry publication, and how that ties back to why you want to work there.

Example: *While researching your company, I was happy to discover that you put an emphasis on learning and development to help your employees achieve their career goals. That is exciting to me as I am always looking for ways to to enhance my current skills and obtain new ones. [The next sentence is where you can include an example of how you've done this.]*

Closing paragraph

The closing paragraph should be pretty straightforward. Thank them for their time and request an opportunity to interview for the position. Reiterate that you've included your contact information at the top and are available to meet at their convenience.

The cover letter template that will get you hired

Important reminders:

Keep it short and sweet. A cover letter should be around three paragraphs. Never go over one page.

Customize it. Those copy/paste cover letters are easy to spot, so make sure you personalize yours as much as possible, even if you're applying to a similar position at different companies. Proofread. As with all application materials, proofread, proofread and proofread again. Ask your friends or family members to review it for errors as well.

Similar cover letter examples:

Now that you know what should go in your cover letter, here are some industry-specific examples to inspire you.

[Sample web developer cover letter](#)

[Sample registered nurse cover letter](#)

[Sample physical therapist cover letter](#)

[Sample customer service cover letter](#)

[Sample accounting cover letter](#)

Tips for your cover letter:

[Cover Letter tips to help you land your dream job](#)

[Don't give away your entire story in the cover letter](#)

Research salaries for any job and location with [CareerBuilder's Salary Tool](#).