

# Cover letters

# What is a cover letter?

A cover letter will usually accompany your resume when you apply for a job or internship.

It should amplify (not repeat) the material in your resume in such a way as to make it clear that you know what they are looking for and that you are ideal for the position.

Unlike the resume, where a standard format is expected, the cover letter can show your originality. But it should be professional in tone, about a page in length, and cover some basics which we will review.

# Things to think about before you write

- What does the organization do?
- What will the person do in the advertised position?
- What skills will the position require?
- What have you done that fits those requirements?
- Why should they hire you, rather than someone else?

List the things they are looking for, and then note the skills, experience, accomplishments that match.

# Use proper business formatting

It should include the following elements, from top to bottom:

1. your address
2. date
3. recipient's address
4. salutation (Dear Soandso,)
5. letter text (see below)
6. closing (Sincerely,)
7. space for your signature
8. your name

Address to a person, if possible. (next best: Dear Hiring Manager, Dear Editorial Team, etc.)

# An example from the career center website

**Katniss Everdeen**

201 S 1460 E  
District 12, Panem

(801) 581.6186

[email.email@email.com](mailto:email.email@email.com)

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Ms. Pat Johnson  
LMNO Company  
1234 Business Loop Rd, Ste 4  
The City, UT 84112

April 26, 20XX

Dear Ms. Johnson.

BLAH, BLAH, BLAH

Sincerely,

*Katniss Everdeen*

Katniss Everdeen

# Opening paragraph

Introduce who you are and why you are writing. Then relate your skills and goals to the organization and position:

I am a pastry chef with 15 years of experience in the industry, and I would like to be considered for your advertised position in cake marketing. . . ”

If you have a previous connection with them, allude to it here. Mention a contact, if you have one.

Jane Doe suggested I contact you about the job, as she feels my skills would be a good fit for the position.

Then amplify that with specifics, relating your background to the position, perhaps stating what you accomplished or your special skills

As a coordinator for Cake Incorporated, I ...

## Another example...

I am writing to express my interest in the international marketing position open at WellCam, Inc. My colleague Janna Doling recommended that I contact you directly about this position, owing to the years I have spent developing successful campaigns for XYZ company.

The emphasis should be about what you can do for them, not what they can do for you.

# How might this opening be improved?

Dear Ms. Recruiter,

I am thrilled to hear about the opportunity with ABC Non-Profit Foundation as a Marketing Manager within the Communications and Marketing department. I believe that my experiences and skills fit the position well and that my personality and experience would be a good match for the outside-the-box thinking and dedication to making a difference for which your organization is known.



## A suggested edit:

ORIGINAL: I am thrilled to hear about the opportunity with ABC Non-Profit Foundation as a Marketing Manager within the Communications and Marketing department. I believe that my experiences and skills fit the position well and that my personality and experience would be a good match for the outside-the-box thinking and dedication to making a difference for which your organization is known.

EDIT: I am excited to learn of your Marketing Manager position within the Communications and Marketing Department. I have professional experience in both communications and marketing, and I share ABC Foundation's commitment to making a difference in social justice/sustainability/whatever. I would like to put my skills to work to help ABC foundation reach a broader audience/enhance its revenue/whatever.

# Middle paragraphs

1-3 middle paragraphs. This is where you highlight your skills and experience.

Be specific! Don't pat yourself on the back, make your qualifications shine by describing what you've done. Highlight only the items on your resume that are relevant to the position.

Consider using each paragraph to highlight a different aspect of your experience or background, and how it fits their needs.

The emphasis should be about what you can do for them, not what they can do for you, how thrilled you are about the possibility of working for them, etc.

# From a career center example (edited)

In my course on convergence journalism, I spent 16 weeks of intensive investigative reporting on tuition increases in Utah, and reported on these findings using multi-media resources including blogging, social media, newspaper articles, and press releases. As LMNO company evolves toward multi-media outlets, my experience in convergence journalism as well as ability to write for different outlets will contribute to LMNO's mission to stay relevant in a changing news environment.

In addition to classroom experience, I have spent the last 12 months in various newsroom internships across the Wasatch front. These internships have given me hands-on experience in research, interviewing, and editing story packages. As an Assistant Producer, I will bring my classroom and real world experience to this role to help LMNO Company meet its goals of being the number one hard news station in the valley.

## Closing paragraph

Sum up. You can use this section to refer to future desired action or contact, sum up why you are a good match for the position, etc. (1-3 sentences).

It was a pleasure speaking to you this afternoon. I share your commitment to excellent pastry, and I am eager to help Cake Incorporated spread the joy of cake to underserved communities.

OR

I would be delighted to learn more about this position and show you how I can contribute to Cake Incorporated's work in the pastry arts.

# Personalize your letter

Find out as much as you can about the company. Make it clear in the letter that you know what the company does, what it's known for.

Try to find out the hiring manager's name (look online or call and ask). Address the letter to that person.

Name-dropping can be helpful in the opening, if you know someone in the company (and they are supportive and know you are applying).

Many online sample cover letters are very generic -- don't copy them!

# Style counts

Use a professional tone (don't gush). Don't use contractions.

Use assertive prose (avoid "I believe" "I feel")

Avoid formulaic or generic statements, and cliches

Be concise. Long paragraphs and not enough white space make it hard to read. Aim for no more than 3 sentences per paragraph, perhaps 5-6 lines of text, and white space at top and bottom.

Proofread it. Have someone else proofread it too.