



# Cover Letter Writing

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## What is a cover letter?

A cover letter is your chance to tell an employer why they should hire you instead of any other candidate. While your resume is a summary of your accomplishments, your cover letter allows you to explain why your education, experience, and abilities make you the best candidate. A cover letter should grab the employer's attention and make them want to spend a little more time reading your resume, as well as your cover letter.

## Parts of a cover letter:

**Salutation:** Address the person to whom the letter is being sent. "Dear Dr./Mr./Ms. \_\_\_\_\_" is the best format. Never use first names. Also, do everything possible to obtain a specific person's name. "To Whom it May Concern" should only be used in cases when you have made every attempt to find a name and have been unsuccessful. Online searches and calls to Human Resources offices can often help you obtain the hiring manager's name.

**Introductory paragraph:** Tell the reader why you are sending a cover letter. You should state the position for which you are applying (include the position number, if one was included in the job description) and tell how you learned of the position. Also, include a sentence summarizing your primary reason for applying for the position.

**Body:** Explain how your skills and experience make you an excellent candidate. Do not list everything from your resume; focus on what is most relevant to the position. Capture the reader's attention by highlighting interesting achievements and challenges. Make the match between the employer's needs and what you have to offer. If there are any items that are listed in the description but are not addressed in your resume, make sure to mention them in the cover letter. In some cases, this paragraph may actually be divided into two paragraphs.

meet the qualifications and how the items on your resume fit with the requirements of the position.

avoid using form cover letters. Instead, your cover letter should be targeted to the specific position. Employers can tell when the same cover letter is being sent to many different organizations.

Cover letters should be no longer than one page.

Block formatting is generally best. Keep the formatting simple and clean, as well as similar to the resume's formatting.

Be sure to include information in the exact format as your resume. If you abbreviate "Avenue" in your resume, it should also be abbreviated in your cover letter.

If you will submit your resume in person, leave room for a signature at the bottom. If it will be submitted electronically, space for a signature should be omitted.

like you

Errors on your resume, errors in grammar, spelling, or punctuation can automatically disqualify you from consideration. Proofread and have others proofread prior to submitting.



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## Structure of a Cover Letter

Your Name  
Address  
City, State Zip  
Phone Number  
Email Address

Date

Employer's Name  
Title  
Organization Name  
Address  
City, State Zip

Dear Dr./Mr./Ms. \_\_\_\_\_:

**Introductory Paragraph:** State position for which you are applying, how you learned of the position, and why you decided to apply.

**Body:** Give specific examples of your qualifications, making the connection between your abilities and the employer's needs.

**Concluding Paragraph:** Thank the employer for their time, reiterate your enthusiasm, and provide contact information for the employer to get in touch with you.

Sincerely,

Your Name



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## Sample Cover Letter

Mary Jane Sanderson  
PO Box 859  
Socorro, NM 87801  
(575) 896 5521  
msanderson@nmt.edu

December 12, 2011

Ms. Samantha Harris  
Technical Recruiter  
Stevens Memorial Institute  
598 Panorama Ct  
Santa Fe, NM 87501

Dear Ms. Harris:

My enthusiasm for the innovative cancer research being performed at Stevens Memorial Institute has led me to apply for the position of Biologist II. I will receive my Bachelor of Science degree in Biochemistry from New Mexico Institute of Mining and Technology (New Mexico Tech) in May 2012. I learned of this position from Mr. Rick Marks, Senior Biologist at Stevens.

I believe my combination of real world experience and high caliber education makes me an excellent candidate for this position. During the summer of 2011, I participated in the Research Experience for Undergraduates program at the University of Washington. This experience allowed me to study the effects of several known carcinogens both in the laboratory and in



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## Sample Cover Letter

Anthony T. Roberts  
7886 Bullock Blvd.  
Socorro, NM 87801  
937.585.2267  
aroberts2013@gmail.com

November 30, 2011

Dr. Maxwell Carter  
Laboratory Director  
Materials Engineering Department  
University of Arizona  
1 University Place

Tucson, Arizona 85724  
November 30, 2011

Dear Dr. Carter:  
I am currently a junior at the University of Arizona, majoring in Materials Engineering. I am interested in the position of Laboratory Assistant in your department. I believe that my background and skills would be a good fit for this position. I have completed several courses in materials science and engineering, and I have worked as a research assistant in your laboratory. I am confident that I can contribute to your team and help with your research. I would be happy to provide you with more information about my qualifications. Thank you for your time and consideration.