

Writing a cover letter

A cover letter is a short letter that introduces your resume to the company you are applying to work for. Your cover letter states why you want to work for that company and why you would be good for the position. It offers a '*quick overview*' of why you should get the job. It also gives an example of your writing ability and *attention to detail*.

An *effective* cover letter catches the attention of the reader and makes him or her invite you for an interview. In some cultures cover letters are not important, but if you are applying for a job in an English-speaking country you must include one.

Do I need to include a cover letter in my application?

Many hiring managers will not look at a resume that does not come with a cover letter. They might receive 100s of applications, and rely on a cover letter to save time. Unless the job advertisement says "no letter is necessary", you should include a cover letter to be safe. Sometimes, job ads ask for a 'hand-written' cover letter, but this is rare.

A cover letter should:

- say why you are writing and for what position you are applying
- say where you saw the advertisement
- be clear and to the point
- repeat the specific skills, abilities, and experience the job advertisement identifies
- show you have done your homework - you must match your background to the company
- *highlight* key information from your resume, but do not simply repeat what is in the resume
- be positive and *enthusiastic* - show you really want the job
- encourage the reader to take a closer look at your resume

Tip: Use strong action verbs and phrases to describe your skills, interests, and abilities.

A cover letter should NOT:

- be a summary or repeat of your resume
- be a form letter you send with all job applications. Change it to reflect the new company.

Tip: If you are sending many resumes it is difficult to keep re-writing your cover letter. In this case, write a cover letter for each industry or area you are applying for.

Addressing your letter

If you can, learn the name of the person who will be reading your resume. Spell the name correctly and use the correct title (Mr., Ms., Mrs., Miss, Dr., or "Professor."). If you do not know the name of the person, write "To whom it may concern," or Dear Sir/Madam,". Include your address. Include the position you are applying for. A hiring manager could have more than 1 job advertised at the same time.

Make it natural

Write a cover letter in your own words - do not copy a *template* from someone else. It must sound natural and reflect the *tone* in your resume. The more personal the letter is to the company, the better. A reader knows if it is the standard cover letter that you use for every application. Make it special.

Tip: Sometimes people forget to change the name of another company or position! Be careful!

Research, research, research. . .

Prove you know something about the industry and the company. Don't go crazy, but show the reader that you have done some research. *Demonstrate* you know who they are, what they do, and why you want to work for them. Use *expressions* and *terms* that the employer will *appreciate*. You will find these when you do your research. Talk in a 'language' they understand. For example, if you are applying for a job in sales, use words like budget, forecasting, business development, etc.

Tip: Do not state the salary you want in a cover letter.

Format

Cover letters follow the standard business letter style and include:

Introduction: State the position you are applying for, and try to catch the reader's immediate interest.

Body: Repeat the description in the job ad, and explain why you are interested in the job, and why you are the best person for it. Be sure to include your skills, qualifications, and past experience. You can also include special information if you need to, such as the date you can start.

Conclusion: *Sum up* your letter and state what you think the next step should be. For example, that you will contact the employer in one week, or that you look forward to hearing from the person. Then sign off the letter using 'Yours sincerely,' with a *signature line*.

Tip:

Use the same font style and size that you use in your resume.

Example cover letters

Adele Bauer
Kurt-Schumacher-Str. 1.
Bonn, D-52110
Germany
+49 (0)228 429 361
abauer@deworld.de

Mr David Simmons,
Operations Manager,
Fourston Tower Hotels,
Peterborough, ON M8Y A7C
Canada

November 2, 2008

RE: Customer Services Manager Position

Dear Mr. Johnson,

I am writing in response to your advertisement in the Daily Tribune on October 31 seeking a Customer Services Manager for your hotel. You will find my resume included with this letter.

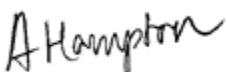
As you will see from my attached resume, my skills and experience match the position you are filling.

Of particular relevance is my 7 years experience working in hotel chains, and my certificate in hotel management.

I am aware of the excellent *reputation* of your hotel and it would be an honor to be part of such a well-respected team.

I look forward to hearing from you, and having the opportunity to meet with you to discuss how I can *enhance* your organization.

Yours sincerely,



Anna Hampton

Tip:

Check your spelling!!

Remember, spelling rules change within different countries.

Mr. Bak Park
#18, Yoido-dong
Youngdeungpo-gu
Seoul 150-790
South Korea
+82 (0)2 781 127
bpark2@hanmail.com

The HR Manager
Nestech Computers
6142 Carlisle Road
Sydney NSW 2066
Australia

May 14, 2008

RE: Pharmaceutical Representative Position

To Whom It May Concern,

I am responding to your advertisement in the Korea Times on May 13, 2008 for a Pharmaceutical Representative. Please find my resume attached.

I have eight years experience in sales and marketing and have been working for a pharmaceutical company for the past two years.

Throughout my career, I have *consistently* achieved my budgets and shown continued success in sales. I enjoy the challenges in the pharmaceutical industry and this continuously helps me to improve my skills, both independently and as a team member. I am very interested in the product range your company produces, and would be a valuable member of your sales force.

I hope to arrange an interview to discuss my qualifications. I am available to come in at any time that is convenient.

Thank you for your consideration.

Yours sincerely,

Bak Park

John Doe
200 West First St.
Auburn, ME 04211

Phone: 207.555.0145

Email: jdoe@email.com

September 10, 2012

Sally Jenkins
ABC Company
123 Main St.
Auburn, ME 04211

Dear Ms. Jenkins,

I am writing to inquire about possible openings at ABC Company for a research assistant. I am interested in a senior level position offering the opportunity for travel and advanced research assignments.

As a professional administrative assistant with excellent research skills, I am eager to contribute my abilities and experience to ABC Company. Given my extensive training and background, I believe I can help ABC Company meet its goal of providing only the most accurate and timely information to its clients.

Please find enclosed my resume and a list of my references. Feel free to call me at 207.555.0145, to arrange a time to meet. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,
John Doe

Tip:
Verbs - do not use abbreviations such as I'm or I've use the full written form (I am or I have). Remember, this is formal writing.

Applying through e-mail

If you're applying for a job online, it is possible to use the body of your e-mail as a cover letter and your resume as an attachment. The problem here is that they may not print your e-mail, so we believe it is safer to attach a cover letter.

Dear Mr. Adams,

I'm submitting an application for the editorial position you advertised on SuperJobs on September 10.

I've spent the last year and a half working full-time as a writer and editor for a publishing company that specializes in educational content. During that time, I've logged thousands of hours doing everything related to the editorial process, including copy editing, proofreading, content entry, and quality assurance. I currently manage a team of over 40 freelance writers who work on a variety of different subjects, and I ensure that the quality of every submission meets our high editorial standards. I'm also very familiar with English grammar and usage and have no trouble adapting to various style guides.

What I like most about my current job is that it gives me the opportunity to learn and be creative, and it looks like this position would do the same. I feel that I could be a valuable asset to your team, and I bring to the table all of the skills that you require in an editor.

I look forward to discussing my qualifications further and can be reached by email at npeterson@email.com or by phone at 460.555.0198.

Thank you so much for your time.

Best,

Nicole Peterson

Key Words/Phrases To Use In Your Cover Letter

- 1) I am writing to you in response to your advertisement in the Washington Post, dated May 13th, 2008.
- 2) As you can see from my enclosed resume, my experience and accomplishments match this position's requirements.
- 3) I would like to point out.....(add text that is most relevant to the position.)
- 4) During my 5 yrs. with Amsted and Querns, I initiated extensive improvements that resulted in garnering 30 more clients for the period ending....
- 5) I would appreciate the opportunity.... to meet with you to discuss my qualifications for your position, OR,...to speak with you in person.
- 6) Please accept this letter as an expression of my interest in the position of...
- 7) A copy of my resume has been enclosed for your review.
- 8) I believe that my skill-set matches perfectly with your requirements.
- 9) I possess the right combination of nursing skills to be an asset to your organization.
- 10) I would welcome the opportunity to meet with you to discuss my potential contributions to your company.
- 11) I look forward....to hearing back from you....OR.....to your reply.

Some sample sentences:

Use powerful phrases. Don't be shy about listing qualifications, skills, competencies, accomplishments, and achievements. Use numbers wherever you can. If you spot a concept you like in the following examples, think of a way to adapt it to your situation. Or mix and match the ideas expressed.

- I am particularly well-qualified for your (job title) position, as the following highlights illustrate. I would enjoy the opportunity to meet with you to explore how I can contribute to your organization.
- Your position for (job title) strongly appeals to me because (tell why).
- If our meeting confirms my understanding of your open position for (job title), I am confident that with my skills in (name skills), I can make an immediate and valuable contribution to (name of employer).
- As we discussed earlier, my extensive professional experience can benefit virtually any employer. However, (company name) is of special interest to me because (explain why).
- (Name of employer's company) ranks Number One in companies I prefer to join.
- I look forward to meeting with you to further discuss my background and to show you some of the (skills or competencies) that I have developed.
- What you're asking for and what I can deliver sound like a match!
- During my three years in purchasing with Tidewater Productions, I've been credited with yearly savings in the \$50,000 to \$75,000 range. This resulted from a combination of skillful negotiation and replacing underperforming vendors. Wouldn't you like me to save money for your company?
- Because I haven't yet notified my current employer of my intent to leave, I count on your treating this response to your posting with appropriate sensitivity. (*Employers often prefer to hire employed candidates, rather than unemployed candidates.*)
- I am happy with my job and am considered to be a high performer by my current employer. Unfortunately, I do not see a path to advancement in the foreseeable future. That is why I am contacting you about future openings in the (career field or functional area) at (name of organization).
- One of my friends, Salvador Rondavi, works for your company. He recommends that I contact you about a position as a management trainee. He is more than satisfied with his work and from what he says, I am sure I would like it as well and will do my utmost to win your professional praise.
- I am long on effort and enthusiasm, although short on experience. Examples of my passion for doing the job well are in references I gained as a student from my employers and customers, such as the following achievements: (list references).
- In my last position, managing an assisted-living facility, I saved 8% of the annual budget without compromising care; I would welcome sharing the details with you in a meeting to discuss the possibility of my joining your well-respected organization.
- My senior year's academic result: A 3.7 GPA with President's Honors, despite my student job requiring 30 hours a week, illustrates that I know how to dig in and get the job done.
- With my technical skills and understanding of your market, I can step into the position and be immediately productive.
- At my previous position on the East Coast, within two years I received praise for playing a key role in raising my branch's basement ranking for customer service (#57 out of 60 stores) to top ranking customer service (#3 out of 60 stores) in the nationwide organization.
- Accustomed to doing more with fewer resources, I can help your firm ride out a financial storm in a tight economy. After meeting with me and assessing my ability to run a tight ship that sails upright, you may decide you can't afford not to hire me.