

All job search letters serve as an example of your written communication skills, your understanding of professional business etiquette, and your enthusiasm and qualifications for a particular job. Also, they provide additional opportunities for you to make a positive impression on a prospective employer. Take the time to draft them and make revisions; they must be free from spelling and grammatical errors. Well written, strategically timed letters can impact a successful job search outcome—**they are that important!**

This checklist is a guide to identifying the fundamental elements of a cover letter:

1. Proofread your letter for errors and complete the self-review checklist
2. Have a peer, faculty member or professional review your cover letter – include position description for his/her review

RESEARCH

- Demonstrate that you reviewed the position description and company website to identify your qualifications, skills, and abilities for the position/organization
- Address why you are interested in the organization as well as why you are a fit for the specific position
- Follow all directions in the posting, including references, letters of recommendations, special essays, if applicable

INTRODUCTION PARAGRAPH

- Identify the position for which you are applying and describe how you heard about the opening
- Specify if you were referred by a specific person and note that person by his/her name, if applicable
- Briefly highlight why you are interested in the job and organization
- Be creative and catch an employer's attention quickly

BODY PARAGRAPH(S)

- Identify your strongest and most relevant qualifications, skills, and abilities; clearly state how these apply to the position
- Incorporate keywords from the position description to demonstrate a strong match
- Elaborate on why you are interested in the position, organization, industry and/or location
- Describe the experiences in which you developed relevant qualifications, skills, or abilities; provide clear examples that capture the reader's interest to review your resume. Tell a story about your experience; do not just repeat your resume
- Discuss how your skills and experience relate to the job description of the position in the 2nd paragraph
- Discuss how your soft skills and personality relate to the qualifications of the position in the 3rd paragraph

CLOSING PARAGRAPH

- Thank the reader for taking the time to read your letter
- Reinforce your desire to work for the organization and your fit for the position
- Identify next steps and describe how you will follow up with the employer in a specific time frame

CLOSING and SIGNATURE

- End with a formal closing, such as Sincerely, Regards, or Best regards; Be sure to put a comma after your closing
- Your full name goes on the next line if you are submitting online or through email

FORMAT

- Stay within one page; two page cover letters are not necessary
- Do you have your contact information listed on your cover letter? You should have the same header on your cover letter as your resume
- Target your letter toward a specific employer and use keywords from the job description and/or the organization's mission statement/values
- Does your cover letter use the same font and font size as your resume? Consistency is important and noticed
- Have you addressed your letter to a specific person? Call or research online to find the appropriate name and title if necessary

Cover letters accompany your resume and contribute to your ability to persuade an employer to interview you. We encourage you to include a cover letter even when not requested. Each letter is crafted individually for each position to which you apply. An effective letter will reflect your interest in the position and organization and highlight the match between the skills you have and the skills the employer is seeking. Avoid "to whom it may concern" letters --make the call and find out the name of the person to whom the letter should be addressed. Not only is this good business etiquette, but also it will make it easier for you to know whom to call to confirm receipt of your job search documents and to schedule an interview. Be sure to use the name of the organization rather than only referring to "your company."

Date:

Name of person
Title of Organization
Street Address City,
State, Zip

Dear Mr./Ms./Dr....:

Introduction: Explain why you are writing the letter. Identify the position you are applying for and how you learned about the opening. Express why you are interested in the position, connecting your interest to how you can meet the employer's needs—not just your own professional goals.

The Pitch: Have the job description in front of you when writing this paragraph. Explain how your qualifications, experiences, and achievements relate to the position. Try not to repeat information from your resume; rather, go into further detail of your practical work experiences and background.

Making the Connection: Here is where you demonstrate your motivation in applying for the job. You should do some further research about the organization and within this paragraph mention how you will be a good fit with the company's overall mission. Again, be specific in mentioning how your values, experiences, and skills align with the job.

Closing: Confirm that you've enclosed the requested documents (e.g., resume and list of references). Provide contact information. Restate your interest in the position and the opportunity to discuss your qualifications in greater detail. You can also include when you plan to follow-up. Thank the employer for their consideration.

Sincerely,

Your name