

Tips for Writing Good Cover Letters

Before you attempt to write a cover letter, a little analysis of yourself and your purpose for writing is important.

- Do you know what the particular company needs? Doing research about the specific company or the industry will help you determine what current hiring needs are.
- What do you have to offer the employer? Your education, relevant skills and experience should be determined and communicated to the employer in the letter. You may want to complete one of the self-assessment exercises available through the Pomerantz Career Center web site.
- What do you hope to accomplish by writing? This will help you determine what type of letter to send.

Tips for Winning Cover Letters

1. Address each employer by his/her name. Take the time to find out the name (and correct spelling) of the appropriate person within the organization who has the authority to hire. Dear Sir/Madam or To Whom It May Concern are a last resort!
2. The “banner” on your cover letter, how you show your address and phone, should be consistent with the “banner” used on your resume, except for your name. You do not need to include your name in the banner, as you will personally sign the letter.
3. Keep your letter to one page to hold interest. Individualize each cover letter, even if you use a common framework. Personalize the letter with a sentence or two designed to reflect your sincere interest in the specific employer.
4. Make a good first impression. Start your letter with something unique, instead of the tired, “I am writing to apply for...” or “Enclosed please find my resume...” Whenever feasible, use networking sources to introduce yourself in the opening paragraph of your letter.
5. Show the employer that you’ve done your homework and have a genuine grasp of the organization’s personnel needs and philosophy of business. Be sincere in your praise, but don’t over do it!
6. Use natural language in simple, clear sentences. Don’t try to impress the reader with unusual vocabulary or complicated sentence structures.
7. When writing letters of inquiry, include information and qualifications that will prompt the employer to feel that a discussion with you would be worthwhile, even if they really hadn’t been planning to hire anyone at the moment.
8. When writing letters of application, make sure that you mention how you fulfill the requirements of the employer.
9. Express your capabilities with confidence and stay positive. Don’t dwell on your shortcomings, but emphasize your strengths. At the same time, avoid exaggerating your level of experience. Two part-time jobs at a department store do not constitute “extensive” retail management experience.
10. Finish your letter with a strong closing which indicates the action you desire. Take the initiative by requesting an interview and/or stating your intention to call in a week or two. Record the date you are to contact the employer and be sure to call, even if you can only leave a message.
11. Check and recheck your letter for spelling, punctuation, and sentence structure. Have someone who is a good writer review your letter with you.
12. Make sure the final letter is completely professional in appearance. Use standard business letter format on stationary that matches your resumes. Use a good quality printer.
13. Finally, check for the number of “I” statements. If too many sentences begin with “I” look for ways to re-word them.