

THE COVER LETTER – BASIC AIMS

I. MYTHS ABOUT COVER LETTERS THAT JUST AREN'T TRUE

The cover letter . . .

- summarizes the resume
- merely introduces the resume
- should be no more than a paragraph in length
- can employ a greeting like “Dear Employer”
- is an opportunity to talk about personal life and feelings

II. BASIC AIMS OF THE COVER LETTER – THINGS YOU WANT TO DO!

- create a good first impression
- focus on employer –
THEM language (what I can offer/contribute) vs.
ME language (great career opportunity for me)
- describe/present qualifications as benefits –
correlates skills, knowledge, achievements with employer’s
priorities
- explains why organization/company is a place where you can
make a contribution
- show savvy -- your knowledge of THEM demonstrates you are
committed enough to investigate their organization, services,
products, markets, employment needs AND you know how to
meet those needs
- reveal your critical thinking skills
- present you as a three-dimensional person
(skills, understanding, interest)

WRITING THE COVER LETTER

I. FORMAT & CONTENT

- A. Your contact information – top, right-hand corner
 - 1. Return Address, phone number, w/o your name
 - 2. No Abbreviations
- B. Date line – 2 lines beneath return address on the right
 - 1. Write out the date
 - 2. Example: February 28, 2006

- C. Addressee – 2 lines beneath the date on the left side
 - 1. Name
 - 2. Business title
 - 3. Organization name
 - 4. Organization address (2 lines)

- D. Salutation – 2 lines beneath addressee information
 - 1. Dear Mr. / Ms. – never a first name
 - 2. Followed by a colon (:)
 - 3. If individual is unknown –
 - a. Dear Hiring Manager / Search Committee / Personnel Director
 - b. Dear Sir / Madam
 - c. To whom it may concern

- E. First paragraph –
 - 1. State immediately and concisely the position which you wish to be considered for and what makes you the best candidate
 - 2. If responding to an advertisement, reference the publication name and date
 - 3. If writing in response to a contact (recruiter, business connection), reference the individual.

Example:

Having majored in mathematics at Clarion University of Pennsylvania, where I also worked as a Research Assistant, I am confident that as a Research Trainee in your economics research department I would contribute to City Bank's goals.

- F. Second paragraph –
 - 1. Detail what you can contribute to the organization
 - 2. Show how qualifications will benefit organization
 - 3. Discuss how your skills specifically relate to the job's requirements

Example:

In addition to my strong background in mathematics, I also offer significant business experience, having worked in a data processing firm, a bookstore, and a restaurant. (Explain job-specific / transferable Skills) I am sure that my courses in statistics and computer programming would also prove particularly useful in the position of Trainee. (How?)

G. Third paragraph – present self as eager to work in the profession/ business

1. Describe interest in the organization
2. Indicate your knowledge of the organization or field

Example:

I am attracted to City Bank by your recent rapid growth and the superior reputation of your economic research department. After studying different commercial banks, I have concluded that City Bank will continue to be a strong competitive presence in the changing economic environment.

H. Final paragraph –

1. Request an interview
2. Include phone number and hours you can be reached

Example:

I would like to interview with you at your earliest convenience. I am best reached between 3:00 and 5:00 P.M. at (xxx) xxx-xxxx. Thank you for your time and consideration. I look forward to hearing from you.

I. The closing – 2 lines below the body & aligned with your contact information & date

1. Keep it simple – Sincerely
2. 4 lines beneath this, type in your full name as it appears on your resume
3. Sign ABOVE your name in black ink

Example:

Sincerely,

Robin Cheatham

J. The enclosure line – if enclosing a resume or other materials, include an in closure line, flush left at the bottom of the letter.

Example:

Enc. Resume/List of references

(Adapted from *Cover Letter Almanac*, pp. 30-32)

II. STYLE – Your letter represents you; it's an employer's first glimpse of who you are on many levels. Details DO matter!

A. Language

1. Tailor your language to your reader
2. Be concise, but thorough – use simple, direct language
 - I am a person who believes that the values of fervent dedication, cooperative teamwork, dynamic leadership, and adaptive creativity really make up the corner stones and are the crucial components of any totally successful sales venture.
 - Dedication, teamwork, leadership, and creativity are essential to successful sales.
3. Active voice vs. passive voice – verbs should indicate actions
 - In my position a computer support technician, I was trained in the use of various software.

- In my position as a computer support technician, I learned to work with a range of software products.
 - 4. Past/Present Tense – maintain consistency
 - 5. Adhere to fundamentals of grammar and punctuation
 - a. Sentence structure
 - b. Accurate wording
 - c. Punctuation
 - d. Capitalization
 - 6. Spelling – there is no excuse for misspellings!
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B. Format

- 1. Length – limit yourself to one page
 - 2. Paper – 8 ½ x 11 inch, white or ivory, 201b. bond
 - 3. Maintain 1.25 inch margins all around
 - 4. Justify left, leave right margin ragged – don't use “full” justification
 - 5. Typing and printing –
 - a. use a word processing program on a computer with letter quality printer (no dot matrix printing)
 - b. no fancy, bold or enlarged fonts – 12 pt. Times New Roman is a good standard
 - 6. Use a standard, business-sized envelope – type address and return address
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C. Appearance – It counts!

- 1. Use appropriate paper
- 2. Be sure printer ink is consistent
- 3. No messy corrections
- 4. No typographical errors
- 5. Follow correct format
- 6. No wrinkles or smudges
- 7. Be sure to sign it!

QUALIFICATIONS

WHAT they are, **HOW** you got the, **WHY** they're valuable

What- Your skill/qualification	How- How you acquired this qualification	Why it matters- What are you the benefits to the employer?
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What?	How?	Why?
What?	How?	Why?
What?	How?	Why?
What?	How?	Why?
What?	How?	Why?
What?	How?	Why?
What?	How?	Why?
What?	How?	Why?

(Adapted from *Cover Letters for Dummies*, pp. 74-75)

Your Address
Your Phone

Date

Contact Person Name
Title
Company
Address

Dear Mr. / Ms. _____:

Immediately explain why your background makes you the best candidate for the position you are applying for. Keep the first paragraph short and hard-hitting.

Detail what you could contribute to this company. Show how qualifications will benefit this firm. Remember to keep this letter short; few employers will read a cover letter over one page.

Describe your interest in the corporation. Subtly emphasize your knowledge about this firm (the result of your research effort) and your familiarity with the industry. You should present yourself as eager to work for any company which you interview with.

In closing paragraph, you should specifically request an interview. Include your phone number and the hours when you can be reached. Alternatively, you might prefer to mention that you will follow up with a phone call (to arrange an interview at a mutually convenient time within several days).

Sincerely,

Your full name
(typed)

Enc: Resume

SAMPLE COVER LETTER FORMAT

(from *The Cover Letter Almanac*, p. 33)