

COVER LETTER GUIDE



COVER LETTERS

A cover letter must accompany your resume every time you apply for a job!

The Purpose

Occasionally, a recruiter will request that no cover letter be sent, but as a general rule, send a cover letter every time you submit a resume. Customize the cover letter for each specific job for which you apply. The main purpose of a cover letter is to intrigue the employer so he/she will want to review your resume carefully (as opposed to the typical 30 second review most resumes get) and then interview you for the position. Cover letters that show how the writer's skills and experience will benefit the employer help accomplish this purpose. Too many job searchers make the mistake of using the cover letter to write about their interests, but recruiters want to know how the organization will benefit by hiring the candidate.

Guidelines

Heading: Use the same heading you have on your resume--center it. Left justify the rest of the letter – date, salutation, paragraphs, and closing.

Inside Address: The full name, title, and address of the person who will review your resume. Take the time to research the name of the person who is the hiring manager.

RE: Between the inside address and the salutation, use "RE:" (regarding) to cite the requisition number for the position, or the name of the job. This helps the recruiter identify the job of interest to you.

Salutation: Use "Dear Dr., Ms. or Mr." and the last name of the individual (call the company for the name of the person and correct salutation) end with the salutation with a colon (:). Do NOT use "To Whom It May Concern" or "Dear Madam" or "Dear Sir" – those are outdated greetings, and it will appear you don't care enough to find out the name of the person.

Opening Paragraph: To set yourself apart from the typical opening ("I am writing to apply for...."), begin with your skills and qualifications and how they match the need of the company. For example, "With significant experience as a community health educator, I have precisely the qualifications you are seeking in a". Then you can restate the name the specific position for which you are applying (it is already applying since you will have referenced it between the inside address and salutation. Mention how you heard about the position – especially if you have a contact inside the organization. Try to avoid beginning each sentence with "I".

Middle Paragraphs: Point out your more relevant skills, qualifications or accomplishments that highlight your value to them. Be concise. You are not rewriting your resume, just highlighting those things that may be of most interest for the position.

Closing Paragraph: Say that you would welcome the chance to meet in person to further discuss how your background and skills would allow you to bring value to the organization immediately. If you are willing to follow through, you could say that you will call in four or five working days to schedule a time to meet (the caution here is that some recruiters may find that level of assertion off-putting.) End the letter with "Sincerely" and your signature in blue ink (if you will be sending a hard copy).

Final Tips

Keep it brief! Write no more than three or four paragraphs and use 10-point font or larger. Long letters in small fonts are less likely to be completely read, than shorter letters in 11 or 12 point fonts.

COVER LETTER FORMAT

YOUR NAME

123 Main Street
Minneapolis, Minnesota 55455
Email address / 612-555-1234
LinkedIn URL

Contact information
appears identical to the
format you use on your
resume

John Doe, M.D.
XYZ Corporation
8903 Second Street
Columbus, OH 43210

Specific individual whenever possible

Today's Date

RE: Job Posting PHE6574

Include the job
posting # or title of
the position

Start with one or two of your
strengths; avoid beginning sentences
with "I"

Dear Dr. Doe:

With a strong theoretical background in public health education, as well as practical experience both inside and outside the academic setting, I believe I possess precisely the qualifications you are seeking in a Public Health Educator. The position description on your website mentioned a research component, which particularly piqued my interest, as that is one of my strengths.

Where did you
find the posting?

My graduate studies in the School of Public Health at the University of Minnesota have prepared me very well for this professional opportunity. For both years of my master's degree program, I was a Research Assistant, focusing primarily on the changes in a particular focus group after exposing all of its members to bi-monthly educational interventions.

In the summer between my first and second years of graduate school, I completed an internship at the Minnesota Department of Health. My responsibilities there focused on conducting educational seminars for different adolescent community organizations around the Twin Cities.

My educational background and experience in public health education and research would enable me to be an immediate contributor to your team at XYZ Corporation and the citizens of Columbus, Ohio. It would be my pleasure to meet with you to further discuss this position. My resume is enclosed for your review. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Can you
contribute
immediately?
Say that!

Always say "thank you"
and suggest some sort
of action.

Your name (exactly as it appears above)