

Cover Letter Writing Tips

“Cover letters are read. Resumes are skimmed. “

Dave Jensen, Science Careers. Org

Goals/ Purpose

- One page brochure to market your talent and explain why you are the best candidate for the job.
- Highlight qualifications
- Catch the employers eye

The Basics (3-4 paragraphs)

1. Paragraph 1: Introduction

Introduce who you are and what you do.

Be **specific** about the position for which you are applying.

Tell where you learned about the position.

2. Paragraph 2-3: Fit

Use the words of the job description to make the connection.

Emphasize a good fit between details of the job description and your skills, knowledge, and experience. Explain appropriate accomplishments/ relevant experiences (1-2 sentences each) based on the job description.

Distinguish yourself from the competitors. Explain why you are a unique catch. Explain why you are special. Be specific. Give tangible examples.

3. Paragraph 3 or 4: Follow-up

Describe availability to interview.

Provide contact information and promise to follow-up on application.

Do's

- Know the audience. Address the letter to a specific person/ department.
- Limit length to one page
- Use nice paper (High quality cotton, ivory or white)
- Use good formatting (Indentation vs. Block – be consistent)
- Use formal language
- Use concise and powerful words (key words specific to profession)
- Use common font type (Helvetica, Times New Roman, Courier)
- Use a readable font size (10-14 pt / 12 pt is typical)
- Use flawless spelling, punctuation, and grammar
- Minimize abbreviations
- Leave plenty of room for signature (4 blank lines)
- Proofread **MULTIPLE** times
- Date the cover letter with the date it is sent
- Use enough postage

Don't Do's

- Do not use generic cover letters.
- Do not send photocopied letters.
- Do not use words that are uncomfortable or words not used in conversation.
- Do not use italics or underlying for emphasis
- Do not over use "I" ("I" strain)
- Do not use clichés
- Do not use pink, green, or blue paper
- Do not use patterned paper