

Writing Your Cover Letter

A cover letter personalizes your resume by serving as an introduction to the organization that you apply to. An effective cover letter demonstrates your motivations for wanting the opportunity, your relevant qualifications, and your writing ability. As an important tool in your job search, your letter should be written and reviewed with care.

Helpful Tips

- While typically formatted as a business letter, an alternative way to format your address on your cover letter is to copy and paste your name and contact information from your resume. This creates a consistent “brand” for your application materials, including references if requested.
- If the name of a specific contact is not provided in the job posting, you can generally address an organization representative. For example, if you were applying to a position at the University at Buffalo, it would appear as

Dear University at Buffalo Representative:

- Keep the tone positive and focus on what you can offer the employer.
- The job description is the employer’s wish list – base your cover letter on the relevant points in your background.
- When emailing your application materials to employers, send them as PDFs. When applying on websites and uploading to an Applicant Tracking System (ATS), look for the preferred document types.

Format and Content

Street Address
City, State Zip
Date

Contact Name
Title
Organization Name
Street Address
City, State Zip

Dear Contact Name:

First Paragraph – Focus on the organization’s needs and wants in a candidate. State why you are writing by naming the specific position you are applying to or the type of position you are inquiring about. Demonstrate your knowledge of the organization and field, and introduce the themes that qualify you for the role, such as your educational background and prior experiences.

Body Paragraph(s) – Demonstrate how your qualifications match the organization’s needs. Utilize the job description as your guide to select specific examples that demonstrate that you have the required skills and experiences. Your goal is to enhance the information on your resume, not repeat it.

Closing Paragraph – Summarize why you are the right fit for the position and politely request an interview. You may choose to include your phone number and/or email address if your chosen cover letter format does not present it at the top of your letter.

Closing message,

Your Signature (optional)

Your name typed