

The Cover Letter

Your cover letter is like introducing yourself with a **personal handshake**. It is an essential, professional letter that should always accompany your resume when applying for a position. Highlighting your most important and related skills as they pertain to the position, it also communicates to the employer WHY you are interested in their organization. Employers hire applicants who not only possess the necessary qualifications and skills, but who also fit the organization's culture and support their mission and values. Make sure it is professional, error-free, and well written. Employers typically read cover letters quickly, so use simple, clear sentences. Choose every word carefully.

Cover Letter Guidelines

What are you applying for? Be specific.

- Address your letter to a specific person rather than "To Whom it May Concern."
- Attract the reader's attention by clearly stating your reasons for writing.
- Identify the position you are applying for. State how you heard about it. Don't make the reader guess what you are asking for; be specific.

Why are you the best person for the job?

- Demonstrate your past accomplishments and skills by highlighting your most important and related skills as they pertain to the position.
- Address the KEY-WORDS and JOB QUALIFICATIONS and provide behavior-based evidence for these skills.
- Ex: If a qualification is "strong communication skills" then be sure to address this skill in your cover letter, citing an example of how you've demonstrated this in the past.

Why do you want to work for the organization/company?

- Do your research. Employers like to hire people committed to their mission, vision, and values. Learn about their products and services. Just as Bethel focuses on their mission and values, so do corporations and non-profits. Explain WHY you want to work for them. What is it about their mission and values that you support and why?

What are the next steps?

- Close your cover letter in a courteous, pleasant manner. Ask for action and make the response easy. Include your phone number and other helpful information. If you are asking for information, don't expect them to respond; let them know you will be calling them some time in the following week.

Other Types of Cover Letters

- **Email Cover Letters** - Many employers request email resume submissions. If so, you may **cut and paste** your cover letter into the body of the email.
 - Your **signature block** (address, etc.) goes below your name at the bottom of the email, while it goes at the top of the page on hard copy. Of course you won't have a handwritten signature on e-mail, but don't forget this on hard copy.
 - Email requires a **subject line** logical to the recipient, such as "Your Name – Name of Position Applied For." Email subject lines can make or break whether your e-mail is opened and read.
 - Correct grammar, spelling, and professional writing are expected! No texting lingo.
- **Inquiry Letters/Letters of Interest** – Used when not applying for a specific or open position, this letter inquires about potential opportunities at an organization.
- **Job/Internship Fairs:** Cover letters are usually not recommended. YOU are your own cover letter!

References: <http://www.myfuture.com/careers/articles-advice/creating-your-cover-letter?>
<http://www.career.vt.edu/jobsearchguide/coverlettersamples.html>

SAMPLE FORMAT FOR COVER LETTERS

(Top and bottom margins should be approximately equal)

Date

Your Street Address
City, State, Zip

Employer Name
Title
Company Name
Street Address
City, State, Zip

(Be sure to address the letter to the correct person,
spelled correctly with his/her title)

Dear (*Employer Name*):

Opening Paragraph:

- State why you are writing, identify the position for which you would like to be considered, and indicate how you heard of the position.
- Mention any individuals who may have referred you to the position. If you are sending an inquiry letter, simply indicate the type of work or position you are seeking. Be specific.

Middle Paragraph(s):

- Show how you can be useful to this particular organization – why should they hire you?
- Describe what strengths/experiences you have to offer this employer.
- Highlight particular classes, jobs, internships, achievements, and extracurricular activities as they relate to the position in which you are interested. You might want to use one of the following approaches:
 - Identify three reasons for the employer to consider you for the position.
 - Describe your previous accomplishments as they relate to the position.
 - Illustrate the relationship between your skills and experience and the position you are applying for. Use specific examples.
- Describe why you want to work for their organization – focus on mission/values
- Refer the reader to your enclosed resume for additional information.

Closing Paragraph:

- End your letter by clarifying what will happen next, indicating your desire for an interview, and how they can most easily reach you.
- If you are applying for a specific job which has been posted, you might say, “I look forward to meeting with you to discuss my qualifications in more detail. I can be reached between (time) on (days) or a message may be left at (phone #).” If you are not applying for an existing opening, indicate that you will call them on a particular date to see when it would be convenient to set up a meeting, and also indicate how they can most easily reach you.

Sincerely,
(Always sign your name – Unless sent via email)

Type your name beneath your signature

Enclosure *(to indicate your resume is enclosed)*
OR
Attachment *(to indicate that your resume is attached)*

SAMPLE COVER LETTER FOR NURSING MAJORS

February 15, 2012

Your First/Last Name
3900 Bethel Drive
St. Paul, MN 55112

Employer Name
Title
Company Name
Street Address
City, State, Zip

Dear (*Employer Name*):

I am writing to express interest in the New Grad RN program at _____ and ask that you please consider me for this position. I will be graduating from Bethel University in May 2012 with my Bachelor of Science in Nursing and I believe my educational background and past work experiences will contribute significantly to your health care system.

Through my education at Bethel University, I have acquired skills in patient assessment and gained a solid foundation in providing holistic care that focuses on all aspects of a person's health: emotional, physical, spiritual, and psychosocial. Also, my past experience as a student nurse intern has given me the confidence I need to care for patients and the ability to collaborate with other healthcare professionals. I am passionate about nursing and I realize that critical patient care requires a solid foundation in nursing skills and techniques, prioritization of care, and communication skills. These skills, coupled with my compassion, patience, and patient advocacy, are what I offer as a new graduate RN.

In addition, my experience as a clinical support associate on a medical surgical floor at _____ Hospital has taught me how to plan and organize care, work with people from diverse backgrounds, and become more familiar with the role of the pediatric nurse. I appreciate that your hospital has been designated as a Magnet Hospital in the nation. This speaks volumes about the quality of nursing care that you provide. I would be honored and excited to be a part of your team and contribute my skills to your hospital staff and patients. My enclosed resume will provide you with further information regarding my related work experiences.

My application can only tell you so much about my motivation and qualifications for a position as a new graduate RN. I would welcome the opportunity to further discuss my background, vision for nursing, and interest in this position with you. I can be reached at 651-638-xxxx or at studentnurse@bethel.edu. Thank you for your consideration in this exciting opportunity.

Sincerely,

(Sign your name – unless sent via email/electronically)

Type your name
Enclosure