



Cover Letters

A cover letter is a formal letter paired with a résumé, explaining why you want to work somewhere and how they would benefit from your skills. It is your chance to give more depth to your qualifications, as well as a chance to explain your research, professional experiences, and your desire to better the institution.

How do I draft a cover letter?

Prepare to tailor every single letter specifically to the place you are applying. While you may be able to create a *rough* template, one generalized cover letter will *not* be strong enough for any institution.

First, review the job description, the institution, and how you came across it.

- Cover letter introductions usually involve a mention of the position, the institution, and how you found the job, such as a website or by referral.

Second, research the institution's culture, history, mission statement, values, and staff.

- Keep notes on their keywords and phrases.
- Keep notes on accomplishments, student body, culture, on-site organizations, etc.

Third, brainstorm unique stories and valuable experiences that are related to your career.

- Be **personal, professional, and detailed**.
- Feel free to bring up your résumé for a couple of ideas. Maybe there is something in your résumé that you want to expand on.
- What experiences, jobs, and people have led you to succeed in your career? Why have you chosen this institution to apply to? Have you worked at a place like this before?

Fourth, focus on depicting your development into a competent candidate.

- Develop a collection of experiences and accomplishments that have made you who you are. **Mention any professional development!**
- **Graduate School:** Focus on the reason you completed your academic journey. Then, focus on what abilities made it possible.
- **Medical Residency:** Focus on the reason you took this journey through the medical field. Then, focus on what abilities made it possible.

Fifth, outline a rough draft. Feel free to find **online examples and templates**.

- Committees read hundreds of letters, so focus on clarity and specificity.
- **Show, do not tell!**
 - Instead of writing that you are passionate, do you have a story, experience, or award that shows how much you care about others and your career?
- For the outline, make sure to...
 - organize your letter with a **header**, an **introduction**; an **expression of interest, skills, experiences, and accomplishments**; and a **respectful summary and send-off**. (see pages 3–4)
 - create a hook at the start to grab attention.
 - **utilize your keywords and research from the second step.**
 - Do not mention *everything* word for word. Expand on it with synonyms, stories, experiences, leadership, and accomplishments!
 - expand on the résumé and not repeat it.
 - be confident by using specific action verbs and direct sentences.
 - **Graduate School:** mention the professors you want to work with and why.
 - **Medical Residency:** focus on medical knowledge and stories.
 - avoid clichés.

Sixth, draft the cover letter. Start as early as possible.

- Use a professional 11 or 12 pt. font, do *not* indent paragraphs, and single-space the paper.
- Place an extra space between every paragraph.
- At first, just try to get words on the page.

Seventh, prepare to revise as much as you can.

- Reach out to **professors, peers, and the Writing Center** to receive diverse feedback.

Ninth, before submission, edit, proofread, edit, and proofread again.

- Review the **grammar and sentence variety** to ensure that your paper feels professional, lively, and engaging.
- Read your paper backwards to catch spelling errors.

Cover Letter: Header

Feel free to review any online templates or example. There is more than one way to design the header, but it must have all of the elements of a usual letter:

- your current address
- the date that the letter is sent
- your name in the header (and at the end)
- the name and title of the person you are addressing the letter to
- the institution's name and address
- a phone number, if available
- "Dear Mr./Ms./Mrs. _____" OR "Dear hiring committee/hiring manager/ hiring team/hiring director"
 - Do the research to find who your letter will be read by. If you cannot find a specific person or group, then address the letter to the department, the hiring committee, or a director. Do **NOT** use "To whom it may concern."
 - You may also use a full name if you do not want to use an honorific (e.g., Mr., Ms., Mrs.)

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[Today's Date]

[Hiring Manager's Name]

123 Company Address

Company's City, State, Zip Code

(xxx) xxx-xxxx

hiring.manager@gmail.com

Dear [Mr./Ms./Mx.] [Hiring Manager's Last Name],

from resumegenius.com, <https://resumegenius.com/cover-letter-templates/basic-simple-templates>

Cover Letter: Body and Conclusion

- Introduction
 - **Introduce yourself, what you are applying to, and how you found the position** (e.g., *Indeed*, *HigherEd Jobs*, a referral). Start by summarizing your abilities and why you are qualified to apply.
- Expression of Interest
 - Bring in your research on the institution. **Why are you excited to apply for this position?** How is this institution unique? What aspects seem like a great fit for your skills and experiences? **You want to better this place with your abilities.**
- Skills, Experiences, and Accomplishments
 - Show the readers why you are perfect for the position through **stories, experiences, leadership, past jobs, community service, classes, and accomplishments**. Link them to the mission, values, and job description. What can you do for the employer?
 - If for **graduate school**, you can also mention teaching and research experience, future research interests, and any presentations or published work.
 - If for **medical residency**, mention current and past medical experience, service, and research, as well as your career goals.
 - Present yourself as a future member of the team with language like, “At Kentucky State University, I will...” OR “I am excited to help Kentucky State University grow by...”
- Summary and Send-off
 - Summarize your abilities and excitement to work at this institution. Thank the readers and express a final word of excitement to hear back.
 - Offer to make time for an interview.
 - Sign off like a letter. Use a respectful closer like “Sincerely,” “Best regards,” and “Thank you.” Follow the closer with your name and your signature between them (if able).

Fourth Paragraph—FOLLOW-UP In the closing paragraph, indicate that you are very interested in an interview. Finally, thank the employer for his/her time and consideration.

Sincerely,

(Your Handwritten Signature)

(Your Name Typed)