Cover Letter Template and Advice

If you have a cover letter you’re happy with, feel free to submit it as is. If you want some guidance, this template provides some. Read explanations in the comments (in Word, go to Review, Show Markup).

Your cover letter’s job is to get the employer to read your resume. Use it to point the employer toward specific aspects of your resume that show how your experience meets their needs.

Unless the employer said not to include a cover letter, or provided no way for you to do so (e.g., online application), you should include one.

A common mistake is to explain how the job will benefit you. The employer’s focus is on finding the best person to staff a position. (We assume you’ll benefit, or you wouldn’t be applying.) Write with the employer’s needs in mind.

Organize your letter into three brief sections: the opportunity, the fit, and the closing.

1. **The opportunity.** Be specific about the job you’re seeking and mention any personal connection.
   * + *“I’m very interested in Job XX at Y location. My classmate Helen Katwaroo interned in the Communication Department last summer and suggested that my ABC skills and XYZ personality would mesh well with your team.”*
     + *“I’m very interested in working for company XX doing Y in department Z. Professor Mortensen suggested I contact you after learning of my experience working with refugees.”*
2. **The fit.** Describe how your experience/skill matches the job by pointing out a few relevant details from your resume.
   * + *“My background fits your expressed needs well. I have been studying Film at Carleton University for 3 years, where I have learned to analyze visual imagery and to write clearly and concisely. I also have volunteered at the Film Institute archives the last two summers, where I gained experience with AMBIE databases and even helped to develop a new categorization scheme for pre-1950s films.”*
     + *“As per your interest in XX, I have done Y with Z result.”*
     + *“Ms. X mentioned that you are looking for Y; as my resume shows, I have done Y with Z result . . .”*

This is also a good time to show some **personality, authentic interest, and knowledge** about the role/organization.

* + - *“One of my goals is to give back to amateur sport X because I learned so much from my coaches.”*
    - *“Organization ABC has a reputation for innovation and a collaborative atmosphere and I very much want to be part of it.”*
    - *“I’ve always wanted to work at Acme Inc. because of its focus on service.”*

1. **The closing.** This is just a short paragraph where you reiterate your interest, summarize how you fit the role, thank the reader for their time/consideration, and sign off.
   * + *“I’m sincerely interested in the blah blah position at ABC Inc. I believe that my experience with ABC and my XYZ skills would be an asset in the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ role. Thank you for your time, and I look forward to hearing from you regarding this position.”*
     + *Sign off in a standard way such as “Sincerely,” “Thank You,” or “Respectfully.”*

**Format**

The top of your letter should include the employer’s name and address, and yours too. There are lots of ideas about the best way to do this. For a facilitator position, it doesn’t matter much.

After that, write the date, then the salutation. If possible, address the hiring manager by name, rather than “Dear Hiring Manager” or “To Whom It May Concern.”

The cover letter should always be less than one page.