
WRITING COVER LETTERS

The cover letter accompanying your resume is the first impression the company will have of you. Therefore, make it a good first impression! You should send a cover letter along with your resume when requested by the employer. Cover letters should be personalized and specific to each employer and job opening. Employers view a cover letter as an example of your written work, so it should be flawless.

Limit your cover letter to **one page in length**. Also, construct your letter in such a way that it attracts attention, entices the recipient into reading your resume, and encourages the recipient to invite you for an interview. Avoid simply repeating your resume content.

Use standard business letter formatting when writing a cover letter. Start at the top of the page with **your mailing address**. Then skip a line and include the **date** on which you are sending the letter. Skip another line and then list the **contact information for your recipient**. This should include the name of the individual who will read the letter plus any appropriate honorific (Dr., Mr., Ms., etc.), the individual's job title, the name of the company, and the mailing address of that company. Skip another line and begin the letter with a formal greeting.

Cover letters should be laser printed on high-quality bond paper that matches your resume. If you include a cover letter with an email, either upload the entire document as an attachment or paste the entire document, including mailing addresses and the date, into the body of the email. Additionally, do not write in informal or texting language even when sending the cover letter as an email. Always use professional business language. Convert your letter to a PDF before attaching it to an email or uploading it to a website.

Address the **greeting** of your cover letter to a specific person by last name and include the appropriate honorific with his/her name. For example: "Dear Dr. Parker." Always end your greeting with a colon. If you are uncertain of the recipient's gender, you may use both first and last name, for example "Dear Taylor Parker." If you are unsure of the recipient's name, you may call the company to find out who is managing the hiring for the position to which you are applying. If you cannot find out the name, skip the greeting as a last resort.

Cover letters generally have four main paragraphs. Additional paragraphs can be added as necessary. Skip lines between the greeting and the first paragraph, between paragraphs within the body of the letter, and between the final paragraph and the closing.

The **first paragraph** should grab the prospective employer's attention. In the paragraph, explain why you are writing by identifying the position to which you are applying and how you learned about the job opening. Additionally, summarize your strongest qualifications for the position, such as your educational background or a particular interest in the services or mission of the organization.

The **second paragraph** should describe your strongest qualifications in more detail. If possible, use a copy of the job description or advertisement to write this paragraph and match your qualifications to the position's requirements. Use key words from the job description whenever possible. If a job description is not provided, think about what responsibilities the job might entail and what specific qualifications a well-qualified candidate would possess. Use specific examples of your work experience or educational background as evidence of your qualifications and refer to your enclosed resume. Do not repeat verbatim the information contained in your resume.

In the **third paragraph**, show company knowledge. Match your values and goals to the company's values and goals. You could include more information about personal characteristics that are relevant to the job and would make you a strong candidate. Examples might include motivation, time management, or other personal qualities that are important to the position to which you are applying.

In the **final paragraph**, the conclusion of your letter, request an interview and provide information regarding how and when you may be contacted. Thank the reader for considering you for the position.

Finally, include a professional **closing** such as "Sincerely." Skip three lines and then type **your name** on the fourth line after the closing. When you print your cover letter, this will leave you a space in which to sign your name. Skip another line after your typed name and then include the word "Enclosure" if you will be providing your cover letter and resume in hard copy or "Attachment" if you will be emailing them. This indicates that there is an additional document (i.e. your resume) that accompanies the letter. If more than one document is included with the letter, use "Enclosures" or "Attachments".

1234 Someplace Street
Memphis, TN 38119

July 16, 2016

Ms. Jane Doe
Manager, Marketing Department
Jones Media Services
8910 Riverdale Road
Memphis, TN 38125

Dear Ms. Doe:

It was a pleasure meeting you at the American Marketing Association Conference last week. After hearing your presentation on the trend-setting marketing initiatives at Jones Media Services, I felt motivated to find out more about your company. While doing so, I was excited to learn about the Inside Account Executive position currently vacant in your Memphis office. Please find my resume enclosed in response to the advertisement on TigerLink on July 15, 2016.

As my resume indicates my background has included various marketing experiences. As a part-time Sales Representative for *The Daily Helmsman* at the University of Memphis, I handled accounts for numerous departments on campus. In addition, I was responsible for advertising two major fundraising campaigns for Special Olympics and the Red Cross, using digital marketing skills to reach younger donors in an effective manner. Finally, after interning for the *Memphis Flyer* last year, I acquired additional advertising/marketing skills while assisting in developing both new and existing advertising revenue. To keep my skills current, I have taken several courses that focused on social media tools. I am also proficient with Adobe Creative Suite.

Jones Media Services is one of the largest and most highly esteemed media companies in the industry. A recent article in the June 25th issue of *Business Week* indicated that your company continues to lead the industry in the use of social media and web-based marketing. I am excited about the position at Jones Media Services and believe that with my education and experience in marketing, I can reach your inactive advertisers and help develop your new business categories. You will find my excellent work-ethic, dependability, initiative, and drive to be valuable to the overall mission of your company.

I welcome the opportunity to interview at your convenience. In the meantime, please feel free to contact me at 555-123-8069 or nitajob@memphis.edu. Thank you for your time and consideration. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,



Nita Job

Enclosure

FORMATTING & GENERAL INFORMATION

- Keep cover letter to one page in length.
- Proofread your cover letter to make sure it is free of grammatical errors.
- Write in professional business language even when emailing. Do not use chat speak, texting language, or abbreviations.
- Use only appropriate fonts (Times, Arial, Verdana, etc.).
- Keep font sizes 10, 11, or 12 pt. for text. Font size should be consistent throughout the cover letter.
- Set margins to approximately 1 inch on all sides.
- Single space the letter, but leave blank lines between your contact information, the date, the company's contact information, the greeting, each paragraph, and the closing.
- Sign your letter, particularly if you are submitting a printed copy. Use a signature file rather than a script font for electronic signatures.
- Print your cover letter on high quality paper, just as you do your resume.
- Don't use letterhead from your current employer to write your cover letter.
- When including a cover letter with an email, either upload the entire document as an attachment or paste the entire document, including mailing addresses and the date, into the body of the email
- Make sure your cover letter is personalized to each position and company.
- Start the cover letter with your physical address; below it, include the date.

CONTACT INFORMATION OF THE RECIPIENT

- Include the name of a specific person, with appropriate prefix if known (Dr., Mr., Ms., Mrs., The Rev., The Honorable).
- Make certain that you have the correct spelling of the person's name and title.
- Include recipient's job title. On the next line, include the name of the company. Afterwards, include the company's physical mailing address.

GREETING

- Address the letter to a specific person.
- If appropriate prefix is known, use it in the greeting (ex. Dear Mr. Parker). If appropriate prefix is not known, list person's first and second names (ex. Dear Taylor Parker); use a colon at the end of the greeting (:), not a comma.

FIRST PARAGRAPH

- Show interest in the company.
- Identify the position to which you are applying, and state how you learned about the job opening.

SECOND PARAGRAPH

- Use a copy of the job advertisement or description to write this paragraph.
- Describe your qualifications in more detail, and show how your qualifications, experience, and abilities match the needs of the company.
- Use specific examples as evidence of your qualifications and refer to your enclosed resume, but do NOT duplicate content from your resume word for word.

THIRD PARAGRAPH

- Show company knowledge.
- Match your values and goals to the company's values and goals.
- Include more information about personal characteristics relevant to the job and show that you are the best candidate.

FOURTH PARAGRAPH

- Express an interest in requesting an interview.
- Provide information regarding how and when you can be contacted.
- Thank the recipient for considering you for the available position.

CLOSING & SIGNATURE

- Include an appropriately professional closing, such as "Sincerely".
- If you print your cover letter, sign it in the space between your closing and your typed name.
- Include the word "Enclosure(s)" if you will be providing your cover letter and resume (and any other supporting documents) in hard copy or "Attachment(s)" if you will be emailing them beneath a blank line beneath your typed name.