

Cover Letter Guide

Once you have identified a position that you are interested in applying for, the next step is to get your foot in the door. You can accomplish this by crafting an excellent cover letter. **The cover letter should summarize your qualifications in a letter format that will appeal to the employer on a personal level.** It is important to spend time learning about the organization so that you have a clear understanding of what the position entails. A successful cover letter will entice the viewer to take a closer look at your more detailed resume. **The letter should be no more than three paragraphs in length and should create a narrative using a summary of your qualifications.** Always try to address the cover letter to the person in charge. It will create even more impact if you can reference a personal contact in the first few sentences. It is important that your cover letter stands out from the countless other cover letters the employer is likely to receive.

Begin with a topic sentence that encapsulates the contents of the sentences to follow. The first paragraph of your cover letter should clearly articulate what job you are applying for and why you are compelled to work with their organization. **Try to demonstrate that you have researched the company and outline your specific reasons for applying.** Summarize your general work experience in one to two sentences. It is important that the cover letter demonstrate personal characteristics such as intelligence, productivity, professionalism, and an overall feeling for your personality. In the second paragraph, outline your resume as it pertains to the position that you are applying for. **Draw parallels between your qualifications and the desired skills listed in the job posting.** Support each instance with an explanation of how your personal experience and particular accomplishments reflect the needs of the employer.

If the job posting were to read:

“Must have experience working with students of a wide range in age and skill level”

The cover letter could read:

“When I taught beginning to advanced piano lessons for students age 5-19 at the San Francisco Conservatory Preparatory Program, I demonstrated my ability to successfully accommodate students of varying skill levels. There was a six month wait list because my teaching was in such high demand.”

In the final paragraph, reaffirm your desire to work for the organization. Thank the reader for their time and explain how you plan to follow up. Generally, it is customary to reach out after two weeks of sending the document to inquire whether the employer needs any further information from you. Have several people look over your cover letter and ensure that your grammar, spelling and formatting are of the highest quality. Always customize each cover letter so that it will directly address the needs of each employer. The polish and care that you demonstrate on your cover letter is a direct reflection of the quality of your work in general.