



Business Cover Letter Guide

The cover letter introduces you to a prospective employer and explains why you are submitting your resume. The main purpose of a cover letter is to interest employers in your resume. Your cover letter should demonstrate how your experiences, education, and skills align with the position as well as how your values and enthusiasm match the organization's core values and philosophy. Your cover letter also serves as a writing sample, so it is important to utilize professional writing skills when developing and editing the document.

Tips for Success:

- Tailor your cover letter to each position for which you apply. Company and job-specific cover letters are more likely to grab the attention of the prospective employer.
 - If possible, address the letter to a specific recruiter or hiring manager. This information may be available on the job posting. Be sure the name is spelled correctly.
- Let your personality, creativity, and writing style show! Your cover letter is a way for an employer to get to know you beyond the skills, education, and experiences on your resume.
- Follow all of the directions provided by the prospective employer. Re-read the instructions to be sure that you are including all of the requested information.
 - Always keep a copy of your cover letter for future reference.
- Research the company and use industry terminology. The prospective employer will be familiar with this language and will appreciate the research you have done.
- If necessary, explain anything about your resume that may need further clarification. This may include gaps in employment history, changes in your career path, or other similar information.
- Avoid generalities and clichés, such as “I have always been a strong leader.” It is better to provide specific examples of the skills that you possess.
- Proofread multiple times and ask others to proofread as well. Check for grammatical errors as well as sentences that do not read well.
 - Some employers will throw away a cover letter with even one spelling error, concluding that your error(s) may signify a lack of attention to detail.

Cover letter format:

Most cover letters should be written in a paragraph format. This allows the employer to evaluate your professional writing and written communication skills. In a few instances, if you are making a career change and need to highlight transferable skill sets, a bullet point format may be more beneficial. Before settling on a bullet point cover letter format, meet with a CPP staff member to ensure it is the most beneficial structure based on your experiences.

Your cover letter heading should match the heading on your resume.

TYPICAL COVER LETTER FORMAT

First Name M. Last Name
Email • Phone • LinkedIn Profile

Date

Mr./Ms. ABC DEFG (Include a contact person if possible)
Contact's Position Title
DEF Company
1234 Avenue
Detroit, MI 48201

Dear Mr./Ms. ABC DEFG,

Paragraph 1: Introduction

- Express interest in XXX position at DEF Company.
- Specify why you are interested in the position and organization.
- Demonstrate knowledge of the company from any networking and/or research you have done. It is okay to explicitly mention networking connections that you have made at the company.
- In the last sentence of this paragraph, define three key skills you bring to the role. These skills can include a mixture of hard and soft skills and should tie directly back to the requested characteristics in the job description.

Paragraph 2: Content/Hard Skills

- In this paragraph, focus on describing one or two "hard" skills you would bring to the position. It is okay to combine various hard skills into one paragraph (i.e. financial modeling and budget planning).
- Describe specific experiences that you have had at X, Y, and Z companies/organizations that allowed you to acquire or refine the hard skills mentioned.
 - Examples from previous work experiences are better, but examples from school are acceptable as well.

Paragraph 3: Content/Soft Skills

- In this paragraph, focus on describing one or two soft skill (leadership, team building, etc) that you bring to the role.
- Explain how you acquired or developed these skills with context from past academic, professional, or organizational experiences and involvement.
 - If you can paint a picture of the skill by telling a one to two sentence story about how you have exhibited it, that is very helpful.

Paragraph 4: Closing

- Re-express your interest in the role and express appreciation for the company's consideration.
- Offer to answer any further questions.
- Mention that you look forward to hearing from them.

Sincerely,

First Name Last Name

Your cover letter heading should match the heading on your resume.

BULLET POINT FORMAT

First Name M. Last Name
Email • Phone • LinkedIn Profile

Date

Mr. XXX (Include a contact person if possible)
Contact's Position Title
DEF Company
1234 Avenue
Washington, DC 20007

Dear Mr. XXX,

Paragraph 1: Introduction

- Express interest in XXX position at DEF Company.
- Specify why you are interested in the position and organization.
- Demonstrate knowledge of the company from any networking and/or research you have done. It is okay to explicitly mention networking connections that you have made at the company.
- In the last sentence of this paragraph, define three key skills you bring to the role. These skills can include a mixture of hard and soft skills and should tie directly back to the requested characteristics in the job description.

Bullet Point Body:

- *Bullet 1:* Provide a 4-5 sentence story that demonstrates either a hard/soft skill or discusses your industry knowledge and experiences. For a skill-related story, try to detail a story that references how you acquired and/or demonstrated the skill. For industry knowledge, it is more beneficial to reference various times you worked in the industry instead of telling a specific story.
- *Bullet 2:* Reference a major hard or soft skill or industry knowledge that is relevant to the position. Follow same guidelines as bullet 1.
- *Bullet 3:* Reference a major hard or soft skill or industry knowledge that is relevant to the position. Follow same guidelines as bullet 1.

Closing:

- Re-express your interest in the role and express appreciation for the company's consideration.
- Offer to answer any further questions.
- Mention that you look forward to hearing from them.

Sincerely,

First Name Last Name