

Cover Letters

What Is a Cover Letter?



A cover letter expresses your interest in and qualifications for a position to a prospective employer.

What Should My Cover Letter Accomplish?

- Your cover letter should introduce the main points of your resume.
- It should also help you to “sell” your qualifications to the prospective employer.



Header

Emma Markley
Human Resources Director
St. Luke's Medical Center
729 S. Paulina
Chicago, IL 60612

Dear Ms. Markley:

- Address your letter to a specific person, ideally to the person who will interview you.
- Look for the person's name in company publications, or phone the organization and ask for the person's name or for the personnel manager.

Preliminary Research

- *Find out*
 - * General job information
 - * Desired qualifications and skills
 - * Key values and words
- *Check with*
 - * Placement office files
 - * WWW
 - * Trade journals, magazines, and newsletters
 - * Directories
 - * Professors
 - * Company literature

Introductory Paragraph

Your first paragraph should:

- Get the reader's attention, stimulate interest, and be appropriate for the job you are seeking.
- Make your goal clear to readers.
- Preview the rest of your letter. Highlight the qualifications you will discuss throughout the letter.

Solicited Application Letters

- Solicited application letters are letters written in response to an advertised job opening.
- It is appropriate to mention where you learned of the opening in the first paragraph.

I believe that my knowledge of public relations and my proven communication and leadership skills make me a strong candidate for the position of Media Relations Coordinator that was posted by the Delta Airlines Job Opportunities Program.

Goals of the Body Paragraphs



- Highlight your strongest qualifications for the position for which you are applying.
- Demonstrate how these qualifications will benefit the employer.
- Refer employers to your enclosed resume.

Detailing Your Experience

- Show (don't tell) employers your qualifications
- Include specific, credible examples of your qualifications for the position.
- Use numbers, names of equipment you've used, or features of a project that may apply to the job you want.

As a banking representative at Bank One, I provided quality customer service while promoting the sale of products to customers. I also handled upwards of \$20,000 a day and was responsible for balancing the bank's ATM machine.

Using Active Language—Don'ts

- Don't be vague in your descriptions.
- Don't use weak verbs such as endeavored, tried, hoped, and attempted.
- Don't use sexist language such as chairman and manpower.

Vague: I worked as a ramp agent at Comair.

Weak: I attempted to attract customers.

Using Active Language—Do's

- Use concrete words to describe your experience.
- Use present tense to discuss current activities and past tense for previous job duties or accomplishments.
- Be as specific as possible in descriptions; list dollar amounts and figures when you can.

Vague: I worked as a ramp agent for COMAIR.

Specific: As a ramp agent, I assisted in loading baggage, oversaw fueling the aircraft, and stocked commissary items on the aircraft.

Weak: I attempted to attract customers.

Strong: I initiated a program to attract customers to Pizza Hut, which resulted in a 5% increase in sales for the month of June.

Organizing Your Letter

- In general, cover letters should be no longer than one typed page.
- Organize your body paragraphs to emphasize your strongest and most relevant qualifications. Only include the two or three strongest qualifications from your resume.
- Make it easy for readers to scan your letter by beginning each paragraph with a topic sentence.

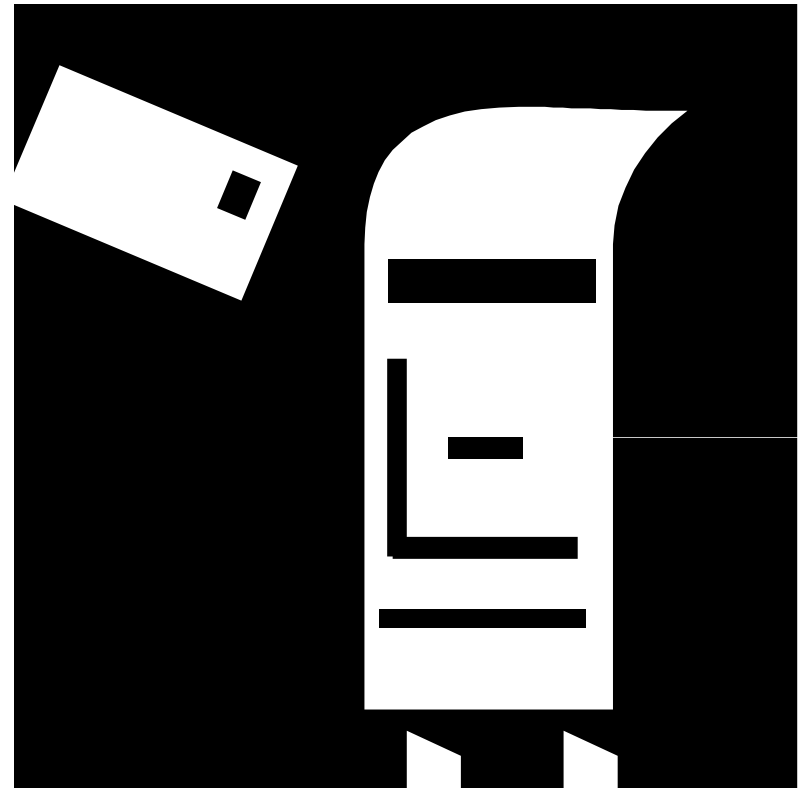
Concluding Your Letter

I would welcome the opportunity to discuss these and other qualifications with you. If you are interested, please contact me at (317) 555-0118 any morning before 11:00 a.m., or feel free to leave a message.

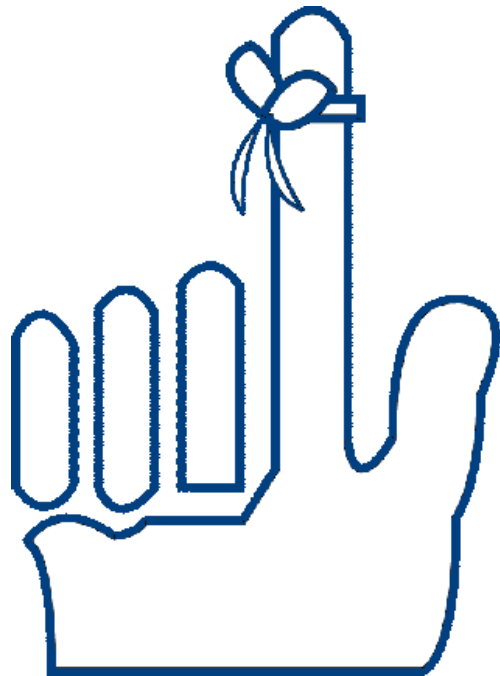
- Conclude by asking for a personal interview.
- Be flexible regarding a date and time for the interview.
- Be specific about how the interviewer should contact you.
- Include a thank you.

Mailing Your Letter With Your Resume

- Coordinate the design of your letter with the design of your resume.
- Be sure to send both to prospective employers; they both reveal different kinds of information about you.



Key Points to Remember



- Appeal to company values, attitudes, goals, projects, etc.
- Elaborate on the information in your resume.
- Provide evidence of your qualifications.
- Proofread carefully for grammatical and typographical errors. The letter should be error-free.