

## COVER LETTER BASICS

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Sometimes known as a letter of introduction, a cover letter is also known as a letter of application, transmittal letter, or broadcast letter. As a job applicant, it is a letter your resume should not be without! In fact, some employers may not seriously consider your resume without a cover letter.

### Why is a Cover Letter so Important?

- It provides detailed information about the type of position you are seeking and how qualified you are for the position
- It highlights your experience, skills, leadership and other aspects setting you apart from other candidates
- It explains what your resume cannot; for instance, opportunities to travel abroad with athletic teams, additional projects with internships, honors and awards

### Make your Letter Stand Out

Employers receive hundreds, sometimes thousands, of cover letter and resumes, and most of the time they all look the same. Don't go crazy with creativity, but stay away from templates and "think outside the box" as you prepare your letter." There are a few things you can do to ensure an exceptional cover letter.

- Always address your name to someone, never "Sir or Madam" or "To Whom it May Concern." If you don't have the specific contact name, open the letter with "Dear Hiring Manager."
- Never mass produce the same exact letter to a group of employers- yes, they can tell! Tailor each letter specifically for each company to which you are applying.
- Tell the company what you can do for them- what you can do for their bottom line and how you can help make them a better company.
- Be proactive with the follow-up, request an interview and promise to follow up with a phone call.

### COVER LETTER GUIDELINES

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- Print your letter on quality paper to match to your resume
- It should be written in standard business-letter format, no longer than one page
- Reference the job or position number if it is provided
- If someone has referred you to this position, reference their name in paragraph one
- Traditionally a cover letter is a three paragraph letter
  - Paragraph 1: How you learned of the position- open with a strong lead sentence.
  - Paragraph 2: This is the substance of your letter. Highlight your qualifications and how you match what the company needs. Give your educational background, accomplishments and achievements. This is not the time to be shy or humble!
  - Paragraph 3: Your closing paragraph is where you "set the hook." Mention your resume, ask for an interview and indicate how you plan to follow up. Be sure to mention how it is best for them to follow up with you.
- Provide correct contact information for the employer to reach you during business hours
- Sign your name boldly and confidently
- Ensure your letter contains no misspellings, typos, or grammatical errors
- Utilize strong action verbs
- Highlight details in your resume and don't rehashed the entire document
- Consider closing your letter with something other than "Sincerely," don't you think everyone uses that?
- Use the language and jargon of the industry
- PROOFREAD