

10 Tips for a Great Cover Letter

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What Is a Cover Letter?

A cover letter is a professional marketing tool used to introduce yourself to a potential employer. Unlike a resume, it allows you to share your story in a more personal and narrative format - highlighting your top qualifications and how they match the needs of a specific job or organization.

Cover Letter Tips & Best Practices

- 1. Check the job posting.**
Some applications require a cover letter; others do not. Always read instructions carefully to determine what's needed.
- 2. Be concise.**
Your cover letter should be no more than one page in length - thorough, but to the point.
- 3. Use professional writing standards.**
Double-check for correct grammar, spelling, punctuation, and sentence structure. The letter should be polished and free of errors.
- 4. Customize each letter.**
Tailor your cover letter to the specific job and company. When possible, address it to a specific person. If you can't find a name, "HR Manager," or "Search Committee" are acceptable.
- 5. Go beyond the resume.**
Your cover letter should expand on your story - not repeat your resume. Use it to add context, personality, and relevance.
- 6. Focus on alignment.**
Identify the top 2-3 key skills or qualifications listed in the job description, and show how your experiences directly relate.
- 7. Avoid generic templates.**
Employers can tell when you're using a copied-and-pasted template. Make your letter specific and sincere.
- 8. Answer the key question: Why you?**
Your cover letter should clearly convey why you're a great fit for both the position and the organization.
- 9. Connect the dots.**
This is your chance to tie together your academic background, previous experiences, and transferable skills - all pointing toward this particular role.
- 10. Use a Clear Format.**
A strong structure includes: **Paragraph 1:** Introduction & purpose; **Paragraphs 2-4:** Key skills or experiences related to the role; **Paragraph 5:** Conclusion & next steps.