

# COVER LETTERS

## Why Do I Need a Cover Letter? Isn't a Résumé enough?

### What is a cover letter?

A cover letter is a professional tool designed to introduce your résumé to a prospective employer and add a personal dimension to your candidacy. Think of your cover letter as a “letter of introduction” highlighting your qualifications and what makes you stand out as a candidate. Many employers look at your cover letter as one way to assess your communication and writing skills, and it will often be an employer’s first opportunity to hear your professional voice.

### What should I include in my cover letter?

Before composing your cover letter, you need to know some key information about the employer and the open position. Make sure to do your research, (e.g. has the company been in the newspaper recently?). Your letter should detail what position you are applying for, where you found the posting (if applicable), and why you are interested in the company and role. You will then want to highlight your major relevant qualifications (e.g. “I am a recent college graduate with a Bachelor of Science in Business Administration and a major in marketing. Most recently, I worked as a marketing intern, to the web manager of the ABC Advertising Company.”) A cover letter is also a great place to highlight some of your soft skill qualifications for the position, (e.g. “As a highly motivated, organized and dependable college graduate, I am a team player who recently demonstrated excellent written and oral communication skills in an advertising internship”).

Remember the cover letter should tell the hiring professional what skills and competencies you can bring to the job, or in other words “what is in it for them,” (e.g. “I believe my internship in marketing, along with the interpersonal skills I demonstrated in community service, would position me to make a positive impact in increasing your company’s sales.”) It is not appropriate to divulge very personal motivations to applying for the job, (e.g. “I am interested in this position, since the salary will allow me to meet my financial obligations”). The tone of your cover letter should exude an appropriate level of positive self-confidence, (e.g. “I would appreciate the opportunity to interview with your company to further discuss how my skills could contribute to your company’s continued success”). Focusing on objective skills and accomplishments will help present yourself as confident and not arrogant.

### How long should my cover letter be?

Just like the résumé, the cover letter should be brief and to the point. A hiring manager’s time is valuable and he or she may only spend a couple of seconds initially scanning your cover letter and résumé. You want to get your point across quickly and succinctly and make a lasting positive impression. (See sample cover letter.)

### What if I am emailing my cover letter or attaching it to an electronic on-line application?

If you are emailing a contact, you may consider using the body of your cover letter as your email content. Begin with Dear Mr. Smith: and then use a full space line before you begin the body of the letter. You will also want to be specific in the subject line of the email (for example: Subject: Letter of inquiry and résumé for Management Training program). Since you will not be physically signing the letter, you only need to leave one to two space lines after the closing, before listing your name. If you are including your résumé as an attachment, you should mention it in the body of the email.

For online electronic applications, if there is not a mechanism to upload your cover letter document, you may want to consider cutting and pasting the text from the body of your cover letter into a comments section of the application.

### Do I need more than one cover letter?

Although there are basic elements to a cover letter, the content of each one should be tailored to the position opening and company. Some individuals develop one generic cover letter and then produce a mass mailing to companies where they would like to work. This approach is generally not recommended. Ideally the letter should be addressed to a specific person (with their title). If, after careful research, you are unable to secure the name of the hiring individual, you can address the letter to “Dear Hiring Manager:”.

## SAMPLE COVER LETTER FORMAT

Jane Smith  
121 Green Road  
Silver Creek, MA 15151  
jsmithemail@wne.edu  
413-555-5555

June 1, 2015

Mr. Robert Doe  
Human Resource Manager  
ABC Advertising Company  
333 Gale Road  
Red Farm, NY 23232

Dear Mr. Doe:

I am writing to express my interest in the Sales Representative position at ABC Advertising Company as posted in the Career Development Center at Western New England University. I recently read about the growth and success of your firm in the May 15, 2015 issue of the *Daily Gazette*. I believe my sales experience coupled with my academic background have prepared me to make a valuable contribution to the position and the organization.

As a recent graduate from Western New England University with a Bachelor of Science in Business Administration and a major in Marketing Communication/Advertising, along with my internship experience, I believe I am a strong candidate for this position. As a sales intern for XYZ Advertising Company, I assisted in preparing presentations for client meetings and had the opportunity to participate in idea brainstorming sessions. During my studies at Western New England University, I served on the Student Senate, played varsity basketball, and worked in the Admissions Office. In these environments I demonstrated strong oral and written communication skills, as well as interpersonal and team building skills. My ability to maintain a 3.7 GPA, work “part-time”, and participate in extracurricular activities, demonstrates my organizational and multi-tasking abilities, which will directly benefit the position.

Enclosed please find my résumé. I would appreciate the opportunity to interview with ABC Advertising Company to further discuss how my skills can contribute to the Company’s continued success. If you have any questions regarding my experience or credentials, please feel free to contact me any time at the email and phone listed above. I look forward to hearing from you in the near future. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Jane Smith  
Enclosure: Résumé