



Guide to Effective Cover Letters

Cover Letters can potentially be major time wasters if you let them be. When I was hosting the talk radio show, Job Talk, we often had HR professionals and Hiring Managers on with us. It was a 50/50 split between those who always read them, and those who never did. Since some employers are never looking at them, it's important to have a template structure for the letter that can be quickly customized.

The biggest advantage a cover letter gives you is the opportunity to introduce your personality. This is your chance to let them get to know you more as a person, not just a skill set. You can share your values and personal characteristics that would make you a quality hire. Those can permanently stay in your cover letter since your values won't change depending on your employer.

It's also important to let them know specifically why you are interested in their position. This will NOT be the same for every employer, but it will generate interest in you. To paraphrase the great Zig Ziglar, 'you can get more people interested in you in 2 hours by being interested in them than you can in 2 years by trying to tell them why they should be interested in you.'

Your Cover Letter should be a combination of formal and informal. Use standard business letter formatting, but be personal about yourself, and them. Do NOT address a cover letter "To Whom It May Concern", ever. Hiring Managers and HR names are so easy to get these days via social media, use names.

The first paragraph should be one or two sentences at the most, and this can be a template you use over and over. Here's my suggestion: "I recently heard about your [position title] and I am very interested. From what I already know about [company name] and this position, I believe this could be the long term home I was hoping to find." ...and include the 1 unique reason why you are interested from your research.

The next paragraph should be in bullet point form, and I recommend 4 or 5 concise bullets. They should highlight your background specifically how you match the position, and your values which support your actions in these areas. The key is that these bullets should NOT come directly from your resume. They don't want to read your resume twice. Inject values and characteristics which are not on your resume.

Close with a brief, two-sentence paragraph. The goal is to express YOUR interest in THEM, remembering the burden of enticement is on YOU, not them. I've read many, many books recommending you express "it's in their best interest to call you because of your skills," but this is a bad idea. Instead, explain *how* your skills can be used to solve their problems. Don't tell them you own a wrench, show them you know how to use it. Close by stating your interest and using an action statement to get them to call you.

Cover letters can make a huge difference if they're done right, but don't spend all day writing each one. Create a template for yourself so you're ready to jump on leads quickly AND professionally. Set a timer, 15 minutes at the most per letter, and cover more jobs with a great Cover Letter.



Fundamental Cover Letter Tips:

Use these 8 points as a checklist every time you make a new cover letter.

- 1) Cover letters should never be longer than one page.
- 2) Cover letters should be addressed to someone particular, a hiring authority if possible.
- 3) Use your resume font. Don't let it flag your information for deletion by using the wrong dimensions.
- 4) Sentences should be short and simple, using small, clear, familiar words from their job description.
- 5) Interject Values and Characteristics because that will distinguish you from the others.
- 6) Use a "conversational" writing style.
- 7) Check and recheck and recheck and recheck for TYPOS.

➔**PRO TIP:** Microsoft Word now has a feature that will read your documents to you! Just click on Review at the top of the page, then "Read Aloud" to HEAR your cover letter read to you. If you left out a word, like a "the" or "a" or anything else, you will quickly catch it!

If you don't use Microsoft Word, but you still want to hear your documents, you can. In Chrome, add the free extension "SpeakIt". [Click this link to a YouTube video see how.](#) Then copy your cover letter into any online form, like in a web hosted email such as Gmail, or Yahoo mail, or any other (no need to send it). Click the Speakit play button to hear it.

- 8) Have someone else read your cover letter so you can ask for feedback.

Remember, if you have questions and you have access to our Support Forum that comes with our Coaching Membership Levels, you can run your ideas by the rest of the members and get suggestions from other job seekers, and from Paul Cameron directly as he is in the forum regularly answering questions.