

## **What is a Cover Letter?**

A cover letter is most often a letter of application for a specific job. Every resume that you submit should include a cover letter. If your cover letter does not sell you effectively, then your resume may never be read. In most cases a cover letter is your introduction to a stranger. Keep that in mind as you are writing. A well thought-out cover letter allows your personality to come through – your confident manner, strong motivation, or conscientious attitude – something your resume cannot do. A cover letter is a marketing tool, and like most marketing tools, it should concentrate on what the buyer will be receiving. Hence the letter should not be directed to what you, the seller, will receive. Tell the employer what you can contribute to the organization. Personalized letters that clearly demonstrate your research effort into the company and industry will have the employer turning the page to examine your qualifications listed on your resume.

## **What Should a Cover Letter Look Like?**

Your letter should be no more than one page. The structure of a cover letter is similar regardless of whether it is an application or prospecting letter. Cover letters usually consist of three or four paragraphs. Either traditional business format or block format is acceptable, but it should be consistent. It should be printed on the same paper as your resume and both should be sent (no staples) in a matching envelope if you are mailing it or it should be the body of the email when you submit your resume electronically.

Although you may develop one basic cover letter, avoid sending any letter that seems like a form letter as employers recognize them very quickly. Personalize each letter for the organization to which you are applying. Avoid using “To Whom It May Concern.” Take the time to find the name of the person who should receive your letter and resume. If you can’t, the term “Dear Hiring Manager,” is perfectly acceptable.

After an employer reads your letter there should be no doubt of your interest in the field and their organization. You also need to convey your personality and summarize your related skills and training. However, avoid repeating your resume. Point out the most relevant pieces of information and make the employer want to review your resume and meet you in person.

## **Writing Email Cover Letters**

Though a very informal means of communication, e-mail is a formal part of job hunting. Like it or not, what you write in an email is just as important as what you would write in a cover letter. Just like a cover letter, no typos, misspellings, or poor grammar that might appear are ever acceptable. They should be individually addressed. No mass e-mailing allowed. Also, no text speak. Write out all words, do not ask how r u? to an employer, or type Thx instead of Thanks, that will get your email and application deleted!

## **Follow-up Emails**

So, you've sent out 10 e-mails and expect to get 10 answers within a couple of hours, right? Not likely. It is likely that you will not hear back right away or at all. More likely you might have to try two or three times to get through to anyone, and even then you might not get a reply.

The general rule is to try two or three times before giving up on a particular contact. If a person does not respond within 24 hours, send another e-mail. To do so, simply re-send a copy of your original with a little note at the top that reads, " I wanted to make sure you received the following email that I sent you ( day of the week). If this doesn't get you a response, wait 72 hours and re-send your message with a line that says, I wanted to make sure you received the following e-mail I sent last week." If there is not response after that – then do not send any more emails to that person.

[Follow-Up Example](#)

## **Thank You Emails**

Job seekers often wonder about whether or not to send an e-mail note to thank someone for a meeting, an interview, a contact or any number of job-hunting relating issues. A general rule is that "send an e-mail, get an e-mail." In other words if your contact has been talking with you via e-mail then it is perfectly okay to thank him or her with an e-mail. However, if someone took the time to meet you in person (not an employer, but a contact ) and provided you with a favor, then a written thank you note is more appropriate.

[Thank You Example](#)