**What is a cover letter?**

To be considered for almost any position, you will need to write a letter of application. Such a letter introduces you, explains your purpose for writing, highlights a few of your experiences or skills, and requests an opportunity to meet personally with the potential employer.

Precisely because this letter is your introduction to an employer and because first impressions count, you should take great care to write an impressive and effective letter. Remember that the letter not only tells of your accomplishments but also reveals how effectively you can communicate.

**How to format a cover letter**

* Type each letter individually.
* Use good quality bond paper (if not emailing).
* Whenever possible, address each employer by name and title.
* Each letter should be grammatically correct, properly punctuated, and perfectly spelled. It also should be immaculately clean and free of errors. Proofread carefully!

# What to include in a cover letter

* Limit your letter to a single page. Be succinct.
* Assess the employer's needs and your skills. Then try to match them in the letter in a way that will appeal to the employer's self-interest.
* As much as possible, tailor your letter to each job opportunity. Demonstrate, if possible, some knowledge of the organization to which you are applying.
* Write in a style that is mature but clear; avoid long and intricate sentences and paragraphs; avoid jargon. Use action verbs and the active voice; convey confidence, optimism, and enthusiasm coupled with respect and professionalism.
* Show some personality, but avoid hard-sell, gimmicky, or unorthodox letters.
* Arrange the points in a logical sequence; organize each paragraph around a main point.

# How to organize a cover letter

Below is one possible way to arrange the content of your cover letter.

## Opening Paragraph

State why you are writing.

Establish a point of contact (advertisement in a specific place for a specific position; a particular person's suggestion that you write): give some brief idea of who you are.

## Paragraph(s) 2(-3)

Highlight a few of the most salient points from your enclosed resume.

Mention points that are likely to be important for the position you are seeking.

Show how your education and experience suit the requirements of the position, and, by elaborating on a few points from your resume, explain what you could contribute to the organization.

(Your letter should complement, not restate, your resume.)

## Closing paragraph

Stress action. Politely request an interview at the employer's convenience.

Indicate what supplementary material is being sent under separate cover and offer to provide additional information (a portfolio, a writing sample, a sample publication, a dossier, an audition tape), and explain how it can be obtained.

Thank the reader for his/her consideration and indicate that you are looking forward to hearing from him/her.

(http://writing.wisc.edu/Handbook/CovLetter\_questions.html)