

COVER LETTER TIPS: For Jobseekers with Disabilities

Most job seekers will agree that they spend the majority of their time and effort into creating a top notch resume but fall short when it comes to drafting an equally compelling cover letter. A cover letter works in tandem with a resume to get you an interview. In some cases it can be considered just as important since it can be the only thing that convinces an employer to even look at your resume.

The basic outline for a cover letter is as follows:

Heading

Your name and address should be front and center of the cover letter. Underneath and justified to the left should be the date, followed by a space and then the employer's name, position and address of the organization.

Salutation

If you know the name of the employer, address your cover letter to them with the correct title (Mr., Ms., Dr., etc.). If you do not have a name or title, go with something like "Dear Hiring Manager" and try to avoid overused salutations like "To Whom It May Concern."

Opening Paragraph

You want to accomplish three things in the opening paragraph: 1.) state the position you're applying for, 2.) mention where you heard of the opening (EARN and Ticket to Hire, One Stop Career Center, company Website, classifieds, Monster.com, etc.) and 3.) provide a synopsis of why you should be the top candidate for this position. Be creative and really try to catch the employer's attention.

Body

The body is usually one to two paragraphs long and should be considered your sales pitch. You want to emphasize what you can do for the employer and how your skills qualify you for the position.

They're wondering whether or not to invite you in for an interview, so you want to stress your main selling points, and remember to emphasize your accomplishments and achievements rather than just listing your job duties. If your work history is limited or you have not had a job recently, use these paragraphs to stress the personal qualities and experiences you have that the employer has indicated they want (i.e., creative, reliable, knowledgeable).

Closing Paragraph

This is the part where you can outline your plan of action. First, express again your interest in the position and then tell them how you'll contact them to confirm they received your resume, stating your hope that the two of you

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can set up an actual face-to-face meeting. The most important part, of course, is that you take action and carry out your plan afterwards.

Close

End with a complimentary close such as "Sincerely," or "Respectfully Yours," and then print your name. Finally, don't forget to sign it!

General things to keep in mind

- Your cover letter should not exceed one page. Remember, employers must wade through a lot of cover letters and resumes for one position, so they don't have a lot of time to go through each letter.
- Don't repeat your resume word for word. A cover letter allows you to address certain points in your resume, and perhaps to expand on the most pertinent details.
- Customize your cover letter for each employer and each position. Don't just write one general cover letter and mass mail it to all the employers you're interested in. The more specific you are about your qualifications for a particular position, the greater the odds are that you'll be invited in for an interview.
- Spell check and proofread carefully and then have another person read it over before sending out your cover letter. Using an automated spell check tool is helpful but cannot pick up all possible mistakes.
- Generally speaking, you do not mention disability in a cover letter. You can wait until the employer contacts you to discuss any accommodation needs (see "interview tips" for more information).

Sample Cover Letters:

University of Virginia's Cover Letters and Other Correspondence ([PDF](#))

Quintessential Careers' [A Sample Cover Letter for an Internship](#)

Quintessential Careers' [A Sample Cover Letter for a New College Grad](#)

Quintessential Careers' [A Sample Ad Response Cover Letter](#)

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