

COVER LETTERS

BASIC GUIDELINES

- Cover letters give employers a better sense of your background and expand on specific experiences from the positions on your resume. It is not your resume in paragraph form.
- The content should make clear, detailed connections between specific points on your resume from your experiences and how awesome you will be at this new job.
- The letter is an example of your voice and your strengths in communication, so use proper format and grammar for a professional look.
- A cover letter should be tailored to each job application. Don't just submit the exact same cover letter to multiple job openings; really think about what each employer is looking for. Explicitly connect your experiences with the job duties and qualifications.
 - Include skills you know will be important in the position you hope to get.
 - Don't focus on why or how the job would help you. Instead, focus on why or how you would help the team and company.

HOW DO I FORMAT MY COVER LETTER?

Contact Information – your own *and* that of the person you're writing to

Greeting – Avoid "Hi" or "Hello" unless you know the person well. Consider using "Dear Dr./Ms./Mr.[Last Name]" or "Dear [First Name][Last Name]" or "Dear Hiring Manager."

Introduction paragraph – Identify yourself, what position you're applying for, and a brief explanation of who you are (e.g., junior at WSU studying hospitality/business management) and/or a single sentence preview of why you are ideal for this job.

Education paragraph – If relevant to the position, discuss your degree's application to the job. For example, if you are applying to work at a hotel over the summer and you are a hospitality business major, you can say something like: "As a hospitality business management major, I have studied how important customer service is to the value of a hotel's business. It is because of this that I will be able to provide 5-Star service to all of the visitors of the Hampton Resort." Remember, the most important thing is to relate your education to the job requirements.

Experience paragraph – This is the same as the education section, but instead elaborate on any relevant experience you have and how it sets you up to excel in this particular job.

Education and experience can be separate body paragraphs or show up together in various paragraphs when you're developing your claims and examples.

Conclusion paragraph – Thank them for their time and consideration and include your next step. If you're going to email them, mention that. If you are going to wait for them, do that.

Closing – Include a formal closing immediately above your signature. Common closing phrases are "Sincerely," "Respectfully," and "Best regards" or "Kind regards" or simply "Regards."

HOW DO I KNOW WHAT TO WRITE IN MY COVER LETTER?

- Read the job announcement closely. Try to identify the specific tasks and responsibilities of the position as well as any characteristics and traits that the employer says the ideal candidate will have.
- Reflect on your work interests. Why do you care about this company and this job?
- Reflect on your work experiences, including your responsibilities, the projects you participated in, and the impact of those projects on others and the company.
- Think through examples that demonstrate how your personality, skills, previous experience, and education relate to the job.
 - What would your favorite boss, best friend, or mentor say about you as a coworker?
 - Choose 1-4 examples that show how you are a good fit for the job and the company. Use these examples as supporting evidence in your letter's body paragraphs.

I AM STRUGGLING WITH WRITING DETAILED EXAMPLES.

- Think of the cover letter as telling a story about how well you fit the position. Stories have plots with problems and resolutions that the characters must navigate. Stories use details about the surroundings to provide context. Stories reveal the thought processes of characters so readers can relate and follow along. For example:
 - In the body paragraphs covering your experience and education, if you describe yourself as a "team player," think of the last time you worked on a team. What concrete actions did you take on the team? What did you learn? If you describe yourself as a "problem-solver," tell the story of a workplace problem you faced and your solution to it.
- Replace generalities and vague examples in your body paragraphs with specific details.
 - Even a few details can make a big difference. Consider the information provided in "I helped customers" vs. "I answered customers' questions about the menu."
 - Substitute "good" with more informative and nuanced adjectives.
- Don't rely on buzzwords like "dynamic" or "proactive."
 - Avoid describing yourself with adjectives unless you use examples to back them up.
- Avoid clichéd phrases because they don't reveal anything unique about you.
 - *I think outside the box.* Give an example of your idea and why it was innovative.
 - *I'm a quick learner.* Give an example of something you mastered and how you did it.
 - *I'm the best candidate. I always excel.* Don't oversell (or undersell) yourself.

THIS FEELS LIKE BRAGGING...

Yes. It does and it should. You want to make a strong, positive impression on the hiring manager!