

Cover Letter Tips

Overview: Purpose of a Cover Letter

A cover letter is a brief letter that introduces your resume to the company or organization to which you are applying. Your cover letter should emphasize why you want to work for that particular organization and why you would be a good fit. An effective cover letter engages the reader and encourages him or her to invite you for an interview.

A resume should always be accompanied by a cover letter. It serves as the first sample of your writing ability and attention to detail.

Getting Started: What to Include in your Cover Letter

Formatting

- Address your cover letter to a named individual, whenever possible.
- Make it brief - one page or less, with ample margins.
- Use an adequate font size – no smaller than font size 10.
- Include pertinent personal data: name, address, email, and phone number.
- Proofread for spelling or grammatical errors.

Content

- State why you are writing and for what position you are applying.
- Demonstrate energy and enthusiasm for the position.
- Highlight or expand on key information from your resume, but do not simply repeat what is listed.
- Actively sell your unique qualities and tell the reader why he or she should choose you.
- Target your skills, interests and experience to the needs of the organization.
- Show you have done your homework; emphasize why you want to work for that particular organization.
- Encourage the reader to take a closer look at your resume.

Writing Style

- Be clear and concise.
- Use powerful action verbs and phrases to describe your skills, interests, and abilities.

Further Resources

- Career Development Handbook Sample Cover Letters:
<http://gecd.mit.edu/resources/handbook>
- Smart Resume, Cover Letter & CV Workshops:
<http://gecd.mit.edu/resources/workshops>
- The Chronicle of Higher Education, cover letter advice:
<http://chronicle.com/article/Writing-a-Good-Letter/46845/>
<http://chronicle.com/article/What-You-Dont-Know-About-C/46129/>

Cover Letter Tips (continued)

Cover letters may vary in content, depending on the type of position or industry to which you are applying, and whether you are applying for a listed position, sending letters enquiring about a position that is not listed, or following up on a referral. For more specific tips on cover letter writing, please see a staff member in MIT's Global Education and Career Development (12-170).

Suggested Formula for a Cover Letter

Your Address:

Street Address
City, State and Zip Code

Date

Contact Person's Address:

Mr./Ms. _____
Title
Company or Organization
Street Address
City, State and Zip Code

Dear _____:

First Paragraph: Introduce yourself by stating your degree program and the year in which you will graduate. Specify whether you are seeking a permanent or summer position. Tell why you are writing, and name the position, field, or general vocational area in which you are interested. Tell how you heard of the opening or organization (e.g. job notices on MonsterTRAK, ad in the newspaper, etc.). If someone referred you, include that information.

Second Paragraph: Mention a few qualifications you think would be of greatest interest to the employer. Tell why you are particularly interested in the company, type of work, or location. If you have related experience or specialized training, you may point it out. Refer the reader to the enclosed resume, which will give additional information concerning your background and interests.

Third Paragraph: Close by stating your desire for an interview. You may state that you will phone or email in a week or so. If you say that, make sure that you follow through. You may want to include your contact information (phone and email) so the reader knows how you can be reached.

Sincerely,

Applicant Signature

Applicant Name