6 Phrases Words You Should Never Include In A Cover Letter

It goes without saying that you always want to present yourself in the best possible light when you're job searching. From how you structure your resume to what you say during a job interview, it all counts towards (and against) you during the selection and hiring process. But knowing what to say — or not say — in your cover letter is particularly important. Use the right wording, and you're golden. Write the wrong thing, and your entire job application can get pitched in the "thanks, but no thanks" pile.

Here are some words and phrases to avoid in your cover letter:

"I'm confident I'm the perfect person for the job."

Yes, confidence is a very good thing…except when you broadcast it on a job application. It can be a turnoff to a potential employer who might then look to see how you're not the ideal candidate for the position. You can show your confidence in other ways, such as by making sure that your resume and cover letter are customized to the job description, citing specific work experiences, skills, and education that are needed for the job. Let your experience speak for itself—and keep your opinions about yourself to, well, yourself.

"I need this job because … "

You might need the job because you've been job searching for a while. You might need the job because money is super tight, or because the job has a flexible schedule, which meets your need to work remotely. No matter what your reason is, it's most likely personal, and personal doesn't play out well in the professional world. Although you might think that you'll be appealing to a hiring manager's softer side, it might just wind up irking him instead.

"I would like to know the salary range for this job … " or "I'm requesting a salary of … "

Talking money during the job interview process is a tricky topic, and even more taboo when you've just only applied for the position. While it would be lovely if all employers put the salary range in their job descriptions, most don't. By asking upfront about money, it could come across to a potential employer that that's all you care about, not the job itself or working for that specific company. So as much as you're dying to know what the job pays, it's best to wait until later on in the hiring process when you're actually offered the job—and then you can negotiate salary.

"I think … "

It's not really necessary to state "I think" anywhere in your cover letter because, by its nature, everything you've written is what you think. Attaching "I think" to any sentence can undermine its efficacy, so it's best to avoid "I think," and its sister phrases, like, "I believe," and "I feel."
"I would be a good fit."

Of course you think you'd be a good fit—why else would you apply for the position? Instead of asserting your opinion, show an employer instead why you'd be a good fit by highlighting examples of past work experience, education, or skills that make them think, "Wow, this job candidate would be a good fit!"

"To whom it may concern:"

Many job descriptions have a point person, whether it's your potential boss, a recruiter, or a hiring manager. Your cover letter should be addressed to that individual, even if they're not going to be your actual boss, should you get hired for the job. "To whom it may concern" can come across as cold or aloof, and that's not the impression you want to give. If there's no name listed, try doing some research to see if you can uncover who the point person would be for the job. And if all else fails, contact the company and speak with an HR person to get the info.

Words to avoid in your cover letter:

"Good"

Good is just that—good. It's not fab nor is it horrible. It's just kind of mediocre, and that is not the impression you want to give to a hiring manager about you or your abilities. So saying that your Spanish language skills are "good" doesn't give your interviewer much of an idea of how good you really are. Are you fluent, or are you still rocking your high school Spanish? Substitute more descriptive words for good with ones like "strong" or "excellent." Even "great" will do, too.

"Best"

Who doesn't want to be the best at something (or several things)? But no matter how awesome you are at something, no one is ever the absolute best at anything. Replace the word "best" with more humble descriptive words like "skilled," "accomplished," "experienced," or "successful." Those still convey the idea of being the best, without being boastful.

"Feel" or "Believe"

You might strongly believe that you'd be a great fit at the organization, and feel it with all of your heart. Thing is, personal feelings have no place in your cover letter. Rewrite the sentence to not include these words, or drop it entirely. Believe us.

"Detail-oriented"

No matter what position you apply for, you should be detail-oriented. But including it as one of your assets isn't really going to impress anyone. The term is so overused that, frankly, it's lost its meaning. Rather than write that you're detail-oriented, cite an example that shows it!

"Love"

Sure, you might love your industry or love the company you're applying to, but love doesn't always have a place on a cover letter. Let your passion shine through by talking about what got you into the field in the first place, or what specifically about the company's culture appeals to you. Using more specific terms can show the love without having to literally spell it out.

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