

## Five Things Every Cover Letter Needs And One Thing To Delete

Online job applications have taken the focus off of the cover letter, but that doesn't mean it's not important. Your cover letter is the opportunity to bring your resume to life with additional information. Overlook it and you're missing a chance to stand out among the other candidates.

Cover letters are also important because they give the job searcher an opportunity to connect with the hiring manager, says Angela Aylward, resume expert and tutor with Varsity Tutors. "When you write a cover letter, the goal is to connect and find a common link," she says. "A resume is an overview of your job history and skills, while the cover letter brings in your personality."

Write a good cover letter by including these five elements:

### 1. It should look like a letter

This is a formal business document, and it should look like one, says Aylward. In the upper left corner put the name and address of the contact and use a formal salutation, she says.

"I recommend that you match the format and font to your resume," says Aylward. "A cover letter and resume should be a matched set, with organization and consistency."

Choose fonts that can be easily read, Aylward adds. "You want to personalize the resume and cover letter but fun fonts can be difficult to read and look unprofessional," she says.

### 2. Use the hiring manager's name

Instead of using "To whom it may concern," make a direct connection by using the hiring manager's name, says Aylward. "This can be a challenge these days since a good portion of jobs are posted on sites that don't mention the name of the person who is hiring," she admits. "But not going the extra step to find and mention the name of a person is one thing that people miss."

Check LinkedIn to try and figure out the name of the hiring manager, says Merryn Roberts-Huntley, owner of Made To Hire, a Portland-based career coaching company. "Ideally, it should be addressed to the actual person who is hiring for the position," she says. "If you can't find the name of the hiring manager with confidence, then address the cover letter to "Dear Hiring Manager."

### 3. Make a connection to the company

Find and make a connection to something the company is doing, says Aylward. If you were referred by someone in your network, mention it immediately. Otherwise, do some research on the company and find something to connect to.

"Immediately saying what about the company drew you to their job post helps create a connection with the hiring manager," she says. "Do a Google search, visit a company's career page, or pull up things from Forbes or news agencies that give insight into the kinds of things a company is doing and being talked about."

#### 4. Explain why you're a great fit

The goal of your cover letter is to have the person read past the first sentence, says Roberts-Huntley. Quickly talk about the position and your fit for it.

"The bulk of the cover letter, which in its entirety should be about half a page, should be about your competencies and any results you can share that would help sell you for the position," she says.

"Highlight your biggest achievements that fit the role," says Aylward. "Take a close look at the job keywords or jargon. Your cover letter should be tailored to the job and not a repetition and copy-and-paste of your resume."

#### 5. Don't forget a strong closing

Close the letter reiterating your interest in the position, says Roberts-Huntley.

"Say something along the lines of, 'I hope to have the opportunity to make a positive impact on your business and the team,'" she suggests. "Adjust it to make sense for the position, but create a positive statement about what you'll do or bring to the position if given the chance."

#### One thing to leave out

Avoid using clichés, says Aylward. "For example, everyone says, 'I'm very excited to see your job posting,'" she says. "Your letter should reflect your personality without being over-the-top. Be creative with your language but don't make it look like you walked through a thesaurus."

Also avoid clichés in your examples. "Everyone says they're a hard worker or creative problem solver," says Aylward. "Instead you could say, 'I solved this particular problem when I worked at this company and was able to reduce their end-of-month open invoices down by 90%.' Use statistics and specific examples instead of clichés."

While you want to include these five elements, keep your cover letter short and to the point. "The letter should be one page," says Aylward. "Recruiters are looking at 200 to 300 applications for each position. Give them all of the information they need quickly and you'll stand out."

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