

THE COVER LETTER

REMEMBER!! THE COVER LETTER IS USUALLY THE FIRST PIECE OF YOUR WORK THAT A POTENTIAL EMPLOYER SEES.

The purpose of a cover letter is to introduce yourself, briefly explain why your resume should be read, and ask to be invited in for a personal interview. This applies to known or unknown job openings, because you have done your research and the company should meet you for mutual benefit.

An effective cover letter should accomplish three things:

1. Introduce Yourself and Your Reason for Writing

The first paragraph needs to grab the hiring manager's attention. Say exactly why you have sent your resume: you are interested in the company and you want to fill a need they have. Demonstrate your interest by indicating any connections between the employer and yourself. Show that you work in the same field, that you share a common professional interest, or that you have been following the company or industry in the news.

2. Sell Yourself

In the second part of the letter, state (briefly) the skills you bring to the table that will specifically meet the employer's needs. There is no need to go into great detail; your resume should take care of that.

Instead, use this section to highlight how you will use your talents and experience to benefit the company. Don't use it to indicate how you think you'll benefit from being employed—with a stack of resumes on her desk and positions to fill, the hiring manager isn't concerned with your personal fulfillment. Keep your use of the personal pronoun "I" to a minimum. Try to use it in this sense: "Here's how I can help you."

3. Make a Plan

Close the letter by indicating what you would like to happen next. Don't leave the ball in the employer's court; take action! Tell the potential employer where you can be reached, either by phone or by e-mail, but don't wait for a call. State plainly that you will call in a few days to request a mutually convenient time to meet in person, a face to face interview. Be assertive but polite. (Some job seekers may want to use a paragraph to explain anything that's not apparent from the resume, such as large gaps in the employment history.)

(Summarized from an article on the Internet at www.careerbuilder.com.)

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