

TIPS

The Resume Cover Letter

A cover letter **must** accompany every resume that is not delivered in person. It is used when responding to a specific job, searching for non-publicized or hidden job opportunities within an organization, or responding to classified ads (newspaper, Internet, employer websites). In other words, there are very few times when a cover letter is **not** required.

Each cover letter must be individually prepared. The letter offers you a chance to say more than the resume. It should accentuate the positive and eliminate the negative. The letter's content must be slanted toward the position for which you are applying.

This letter should be sent to the person who has the authority to hire you. If you are interested in a sales position, for example, call the company and ask the operator for the name (and spelling!) and mailing address of the sales manager. Send the letter and resume to this individual. When responding to ads that do not indicate the name of the individual who will receive your correspondence (blind ads), be certain to use the non-sexist greeting or salutation of 'Dear Manager' or 'Dear Director.' The Greeting is always followed by a colon (:).

Many blind ads do not identify the person or the employer who is advertising the available position. This protects the identity of the organization and saves the organization from responding to each and every candidate making application for the position. If the letters of inquiry are to be sent to a United States Post Office box, federal law requires that the Post Office reveal the identity of the box owner, if requested. To learn who owns a particular box, simply call the area post office and request the name of the owner of the post office box with that number. When you know the name of the employer, you can then place a telephone call to the company and request the name of the person or office in charge of that area of employment.

The exact content of the letter obviously will vary from situation to situation. The following information, however, should be included in each.

First Paragraph - Indicate why you are writing and how you heard about the employer or the employment opportunity.

Middle Paragraph(s) - Provide statements that show that you are genuinely interested in the employer. Explain that you have done research or have read about the company and are enthusiastic about its products, organization, or some other aspect of the firm; or explain that your experience and background are compatible with the firm's interests and objectives and thus make you a viable candidate for the job.

Other candidates probably are vying for this same position. Therefore, it is imperative that you identify those qualities that make you unique. Be sure to express any particular strength you will bring to the company or position. This is a "sales" paragraph. Be specific and convincing. You must stand out from the other candidates. Ask yourself, "Why should the employer want to interview ME for this position?" Now sell that idea to the employer.

Most ads will list the requirements the organization is seeking in the successful candidate. Be certain to indicate how you meet each of these requirements. IF you **do not** meet one or more of these requirements, do not bring this to the attention of the reader. Simply skip any reference to that requirement. Remember, you must accentuate the positive and eliminate the negative.

Last Paragraph - Ask for an interview in a positive manner and suggest a course of action. For example: "I would like to discuss with you the possibilities of joining your organization and am available for a

personal interview at your convenience. I can be reached at the above address or by telephone at (812) 555-1234. If you are unable to contact me within two weeks, I will call to arrange a mutually convenient time for an interview. Thank you for your consideration." The online examples show acceptable styles for your professional correspondence. Note that your return address at the top of the letter lines up with the closing and your typed name. The inside address should be identical to the address on the envelope. The 'greeting' should use Mr., Miss, Mrs., or Ms. with the last name of the person to whom the letter is written. A colon (:) should be used after the greeting.

The 'closing' may be stated in various ways: Sincerely yours, Very truly yours, Sincerely. Note that the first word is capitalized and the other words are not. The 'closing' is followed by a comma. Allow enough space (usually four lines) between the closing and the typed name for your signature. Remember, centering the letter on the paper makes it more attractive.