

Cover Letter / Letter of Application

Any time you give a prospective employer a resume, you must also give them a cover letter. Even if they do not ask for one, they expect it. A great cover letter entices the hiring manager into reading your resume. It highlights the aspects of your resume that are especially relevant to the job for which you are applying, saving time for the busy hiring manager.

Cover letters are generally written in business letter format and typed on white or cream colored paper matching your resume. Include your contact information and an email address if you have one. Also include the date, name, title, company name, and address of the person you are writing.

Try to address your letter to a specific person rather than the "Hiring Manager." This takes a little more time, but it's worth it! Adding this personal touch shows initiative and problem solving skills—qualities that will make your cover letter stand out. Try checking the organization's website or calling the organization directly for the information.

Great cover letters are concise, one page or less, with plenty of white space. Consider creating a bulleted list in the body paragraph(s) to make it easier to read. Below are the key pieces of a cover letter.

In your first paragraph, **tell the employer why you are sending your cover letter.** Inform the employer how you learned of the open position. For example, if you are responding to a posted job, indicate the newspaper or web site and date of the posting. Tell them if you are sending your resume "just in case" the organization has openings in that department (cold call). If someone recommended that you apply, ask if you can use his or her name in your cover letter.

In the middle paragraph(s), **explain why you are interested in working for the organization.** Relate your specific skills and experience to the position you want. Above all, indicate what you can do for the employer. In order to do this effectively, you must research the employer.

If you are responding to a job posting, put the text of the requirements for the job in bold type. Describe how specific accomplishments from your work experience, education, or other experiences make you an excellent job candidate. For example, you could write a sentence like this:

"Your ad states you are looking for **an individual who can set goals and priorities while managing multiple projects.** Management experience in the telecommunications industry have taught me to juggle competing priorities while handling complex projects. For example, . . ."

Ask for an interview to discuss your qualifications and indicate that you will follow up within two weeks. If you are going to be in the area for a limited amount of time, mention the dates you are available and state that you will call to arrange an interview. Show appreciation to the reader for his/her time and consideration.

Close the letter with a generic "Sincerely" and type your name a few spaces below. Always sign your cover letter. Make sure it is free from grammatical errors and ask friends, family, mentors, or anyone you can find to read it and give you comments and suggestions.

Writing a good cover letter can mean the difference between landing an interview for your dream job, or having your resume and cover letter land in the recycle bin.

849 South Jones Street
Apartment C-2
Lock Haven, PA 17745
March 3, 2001

Ms. Mary Smith
Director of College Recruiting
ABCDesigns, Inc.
306 Anywhere Street
Baltimore, MD 21200

Dear Ms. Smith:

I read your company's description in Job Choices 2002 and would like to inquire about employment opportunities in your management training program. I want to work in retail management and would like to relocate to the Baltimore area after graduation.

In May, I will receive my B.S. degree in Management from Best University. My interests in business started while in high school and developed further through a variety of sales and retail positions during college. A summer internship with a large department store convinced me to pursue a career in retail. When I researched the top retailers in the Baltimore area, it was obvious that ABCDesigns had an excellent training program, and a reputation for superior customer service.

Although the majority of my retail experience has been on a part-time basis, I know from customer and supervisor feedback that I have the interpersonal skills and motivation needed to build a successful career in retail management. Additionally, I have developed valuable leadership skills through various roles on campus. My varied experiences, coupled with my education, gives me confidence in my abilities to perform effectively in your management training program. Details of my qualifications are summarized on the enclosed resume.

I would appreciate the opportunity to speak with you. I will call you during the week of March 22 to discuss employment possibilities. In the meantime, if you need to contact me, my number is 570-748-0000. Please leave a message if I am not in, and I will return your call the next day.

Thank you for considering my request. I look forward to talking with you.

Sincerely,

Written Signature

Craig W. Wallace

1225 Fairview Street
Lock Haven, PA 17745
March 13, 2002

Ms. Denise Smith
Manager of Human Resources
Atlantic Coast Industries, Inc.
8765 Virginia Road
Virginia Beach, VA 23467

Dear Ms. Smith:

I am applying for the position of systems analyst which was advertised on March 12 in the Williamsport Sun Gazette. My background and career goals seem to match your job requirements well, and I am confident that I can perform the job effectively.

Your position requires experience in computer systems, financial applications software, and end-user consulting. With a major in Computer Science, I have training on mainframe, minicomputers, and microcomputers as well as with a variety of software programs and applications. My practical experience in my university's computer center as a programmer and as a student consultant for system users gave me valuable exposure to complex computer operations. Additionally, I completed an internship in computing operations for a large bank where I gained knowledge of financial systems. My enclosed resume provides more details on my qualifications.

I would welcome the opportunity to discuss your requirements and my ability to handle the responsibilities of the systems analyst position, and would be glad to make myself available for an interview at your convenience. Please feel free to contact me at 570-748-0000 or lisajones@hotmail.com.

Sincerely,

Written Signature

Lisa Jones