

HOW TO TAILOR COVER LETTERS

What is a cover letter?

A cover letter is a form of business letter that allows you to describe your experiences by providing specific examples to show the employer you are qualified for the position.

Whereas resumes are a brief snapshot of your experience, cover letters contain detailed examples of how you have developed and applied your skills.

You must make a new cover letter for each position you are applying to.

WHY?

- Every employer has their own unique preferences for a candidate. Showcasing skills that they're looking for gives you an extra edge!

How do I format a cover letter?

Cover letters can be divided into four parts: heading, introduction, body paragraph(s), closing.

Here is a brief checklist of what each section contains:

Heading

- Header with contact information (it's best to use the header from your resume)
- Submission date in the form of "Month Date, Year"
- Employer's full address, which can be found in the job posting or through Google

Body

- Specific examples of how you developed and applied your skills, including what position you were in and where you worked/volunteered/interned
- Your preparedness to complete tasks outlined in the position

Introduction

- Proper salutation either with the employer's name (i.e. Dear Sally Smith) or "Dear Hiring Manager"
- A statement of why you are writing that includes the position title
- How you learned about the position
- Your interest in the position and the company or department

Closing

- Specific mention of other documents attached to your submission (i.e. resume)
- A statement about following up with the employer
- A personal thank you to the employer for reviewing your application

How do I tailor a cover letter?

The goal of writing a cover letter is to make as many direct connections from the job description to your body paragraphs. You want to showcase skills and experiences that the employer is looking for. The writing process outlined below is meant to help you accomplish this:

1

RESEARCH

Search the company or organization's website for their mission statement, goals, and values. Do these connect with your interest in the position? Be sure to mention this in the introduction!

2

FIND

Highlight 3 skills in the job description you know you have. Then, find 3 tasks or responsibilities you have experience in. This is the foundation of your cover letter!

3

CONNECT

Connect the 3 skills you identified to real-life examples of when you developed and/or used them. Do these skills relate to any of the tasks you have experience in? How does the company's values align with your own? The answers to these questions are essential for the next step.

4

SPECIFY

Time to put it all together! Each of your body paragraphs (roughly 5 -7 sentences) should focus on one of the skills and experiences you identified earlier. When writing this, remember to include your position title and where you were working/volunteering/interning.

PRO TIP:

To bring up another experience or skill, use transitional words like: "Further," "Additionally," "Moreover," "Likewise"

EXAMPLE

"My previous experience at H&M as a Sales Associate developed invaluable customer service skills. I became proficient in communicating with customers about the store's policies and rewards program. This was beneficial to providing customers with a pleasant shopping experience that would encourage their return."