

## TIPS FOR WRITING COVER LETTERS

- Keep it short....no more than a few paragraphs and no more than one page
- It is always best to send your cover letter to a specific person. Phone the organizations to find out who that person would be for the position you are interested in applying for.
- Write the way you speak. Avoid stuffy, formal words and phrases.
- Limit the number of sentences that begin with “I”
- Make sure there are no spelling and grammar mistakes
- Make sure to use a computer to produce a clean, typed copy.

## WRITING COVER LETTERS

A cover letter should always be sent along with your resume.

**THINK OF YOUR RESUME AS A MOVIE AND YOUR COVER LETTER AS THE TRAILOR THAT MAKES PEOPLE WANT TO SEE IT-** Advanced Techniques for Work Search

In your cover letter you want to show the employer that you're:

- Qualified for the position
- Confident about your abilities
- Excited about the idea of working for the company
- Stand out among the other candidates.

You want to give the employer a couple reasons to want to look into your resume and call you in for an interview.

In your cover letter:

- Quote the competition number and title and tell how you learned about the job
- Use keywords and action verbs, where possible, not the same ones used in resume
- Highlight your relevant qualifications that match the job
- Include information that shows you have researched the job and company
- Stress what you can contribute to the company



## Writing cover letters and emails

The cover letter or email, which you always send along with your resumé, is another important marketing tool. Think of your resumé as a movie and your cover letter as the trailer that makes people want to see it.

In your cover letter or email, you want to show the employer that you're:

- qualified for the position
- confident about your abilities
- excited about the prospect of working for the organization
- outstanding among the other candidates.

You want to give the employer one or two compelling reasons to read your resumé and then call you in for an interview. A cover letter or email offers you the opportunity to write persuasively about your qualifications and what you can offer.

In your cover letter or email:

- quote the competition number and title and tell how you learned about the position, if applicable
- use keywords and action verbs but, where possible, not the same ones that you use in your resumé
- highlight your relevant qualifications
- include information that lets the employer know you've researched the company and the position
- stress what you can contribute to the organization.

When sending your resumé by email, follow these additional suggestions:

- If the employer expects to receive your resumé and cover letter in a single attachment, format the document so that the cover letter is the first page. Send the attachment to a few friends to be sure the letter and the resumé remain on separate pages within the single document. If they end up on the same page, try saving your document as a Rich Text Format (.rtf) document to maintain the formatting.
- If the employer doesn't ask for a cover letter but requires your resumé as an attachment, consider the email to which the resumé is attached to be your cover letter.

Employers do not expect you to sign a cover letter sent as an attachment or as an email. Typing your name is sufficient. If you've digitized your signature, feel free to use it.

### TIP

#### Writing cover letters

- Keep it short, simple and specific—no more than three paragraphs and no more than one page or one screen in length.
- It's always best to send your cover letter or email and resumé to a specific person—the hiring manager, a human resources employee or the business owner, for example. Phone or email the organization to find out who that person would be for the position you're interested in.
- Write the way you speak. Avoid stuffy, formal words and phrases such as "Enclosed please find." Instead, say something like "I'm keenly interested in \_\_\_\_\_ and believe I have the qualifications you are looking for."
- Limit the number of sentences beginning with "I."
- Be original and show enthusiasm.
- Make sure your letter contains no spelling mistakes or errors in grammar.
- Use a computer to produce a clean, typed copy.
- If providing a hard copy, use good quality paper.

The following template illustrates the elements of a cover letter.

## [ Example: Cover letter template

Your Address  
City, Province  
Postal Code

Date

Employer's name  
Employer's position or title  
Organization name  
City, Province  
Postal Code

Dear [Employer's name]:

Re: Competition number and title, if applicable

### **Opening Paragraph**

State your purpose for writing. Tell how you learned about the job and/or why you're applying. What is it about the job or organization that interests you?

### **Middle Paragraph**

Emphasize specific knowledge and skills that make you a strong candidate for the job. Don't repeat the information that's in your resumé word for word (for example, "I have a Communications diploma and three years of experience"). Summarize instead: "Throughout my seven years of related experience, I have strengthened my skills as a communications specialist." Then emphasize particular strengths you have to offer that are relevant to the job. For example, "Your description of the 'ideal' candidate highlighted enthusiasm and strong interpersonal communication skills. My strengths in these areas have been highly valued in my previous and current positions, where I have frequently been commended for how effectively I have handled difficult customer situations." Don't emphasize how the opportunity will benefit you, even if it will. Think like an employer—make it clear how you can benefit the organization.

### **Closing Paragraph**

Describe in assertive, positive language what you expect will happen or what you plan to do next. If you're responding to an ad, include a statement such as "I look forward to meeting you to discuss what I can offer your organization." If you're sending an unsolicited resumé, write something like "I will contact you early in the week of June 12th to set up an appointment with you. I look forward to discussing possible employment with (name of organization)." If you feel it would be to your advantage, mention your immediate availability or your willingness to travel or relocate. Indicate that you've enclosed or attached your resumé.

Sincerely,  
*(printed or faxed copy signed)*  
Your name

Enclosure

## [ Example: Email cover letter

A resumé would be attached to the following email.

From: Rita Low <skilledadmin@mail.ca>  
Date: January 10, 2007  
To: recruit@bissellbrownbest.ca  
Subject: Comp. #222-222 Skilled Admin. Assistant

Dear Mr. Sharma:

I have long been impressed with your company, so when I recently visited your website, I was delighted to find an opening that might have been made for me.

As my attached resumé shows, I exceed your requirements for the position of administrative assistant. With more than five years of progressively responsible experience with a major law firm, I am able to handle a high volume of diversified office responsibilities with a minimum of supervision. I believe I can contribute significantly to your law practice through my efficient, cost-saving and service-oriented approach. I have always enjoyed excellent working relationships at work, as my in-house contributions and awards will attest.

I look forward to meeting you in an interview.

Sincerely,  
Rita Low

**Example:**  
**Print or attachment cover letter**

The following example re-writes the previous email as a letter. Notice how the two-column format allows the applicant to directly show how her qualifications meet or exceed the requirements.

Although this cover letter can be sent in print (signed) or as an email attachment, it won't work in the body of an email, since most email programs won't be able to maintain the two-column format. If you plan to use this approach in an email attachment, send it to a few friends first to be sure that the two-column format appears on screen as you intend it to.

1234 Right Street  
Big City, AB T3M 1L5

Mr. Rajiv Sharma  
Office Manager  
Bissell, Brown, Best  
8724 South Street  
Big City, AB T2M 2B2

Dear Mr. Sharma

Re: Competition #222-222 Skilled Administrative Assistant

I have long been impressed with your company, so when I recently visited your website, I was delighted to find an opening that might have been made for me.

As my attached resumé shows, I exceed your requirements for the position of administrative assistant.

**Your position requires:**

- A minimum of two years related experience
- Proficient use of Microsoft Word
- Office administration diploma or certificate

**I offer:**

- More than five years of progressively responsible experience with a major law firm
- Proficiency in all aspects of Microsoft Office, including Word, Excel, PowerPoint and Access.
- Keyboarding speed 55 wpm
- Graduated from Office Administration, certificate program, ABC Business School

I am able to handle a high volume of diversified office responsibilities with a minimum of supervision. I believe I can contribute significantly to your law practice through my efficient, cost-saving and service-oriented approach. I have always enjoyed excellent working relationships at work, as my in-house contributions and awards will attest.

I look forward to meeting you in an interview.

Sincerely,  
*(printed or faxed copy signed)*  
Rita Low