

Cover and Thank You Letter Writing

Cover Letters

Cover letters are a crucial part of any job search. The cover letter is your opportunity to tell the employer why they should hire you. An effective cover letter efficiently and succinctly explains how you have the skills that an employer is seeking in an applicant.

A cover letter typically has three sections:

1. Introduction – Begin by telling the employer who you are, why you are writing, and a little of what you know about them. If you have a mutual contact, you can mention that person here.
2. Body – This is the heart of the cover letter, where you highlight your skills relevant to the position and illustrate how these skills match the employer's needs. You can do this by highlighting skills and experience from your resume and/or telling the employer things about you that they won't find on your resume. As much as possible, use this section to connect the dots between your skills and abilities and the employer's needs.
3. Closing – This section serves two functions: thanking the employer for considering your request or for their time, and telling them how and when you will follow up. Rather than simply saying "I look forward to hearing from you," it is more effective and impressive if you say something proactive, such as "I will phone you in a week to discuss the possibilities."

Formal cover letters vs. email cover letters

Cover letters are often submitted as separate documents whether in paper, uploaded onto an online site, or attached in an email. However, sometimes applications request that only a resume be submitted via email. In those cases, it is advisable to write an "informal" cover letter in the body of the email. If doing so, the content of the cover letter can largely be the same, but the format and the closing will be different. Keep the formatting more consistent with an email (rather than a business letter) and end by saying that your resume is attached. (*See the next page for samples of formal and informal cover letters.*)

Thank You Letters

Writing a thank you letter to an employer, typically after an interview, is not only a common courtesy, but a way to help you stand out from the crowd. It is also a great way to reiterate your interest in the position. While a formal letter is nice, given that you want the employer to receive your thank you letter as quickly as possible, it is usually advisable to send this letter via email.

Like a cover letter, a thank you letter also typically has three sections:

1. Introduction – Thank the employer for their time and/or for interviewing you. You can also use this section to reiterate your interest in the position or state how the interview solidified your interest in the position.
2. Body – Restate something you discussed in the interview that you found interesting and why you fit the organization's needs.
3. Closing – Review your understanding of what will happen next. If you are to hear from the person in two weeks, for example, tell them how much you are looking forward to hearing from them in two weeks.

Samples of effective cover letters (formal and informal) and thank you letters are on the following pages.