

Cover Letter Tips

Dual Career Program

A cover letter is your first introduction to a potential employer. It should be brief, only three to four paragraphs. Don't send a résumé without a cover letter. It gives you the opportunity to tell the recruiter about the kind of person that you are (i.e. education, experience, special skills) and the position that you are looking for (i.e. full or part-time, whether you are seeking benefits, etc.) The cover letter should state what job you are interested in or your areas of interest for employment. If possible, address your letter to the name of the person who does the hiring.

If you are applying for a specific position:

- State why you think you are a good candidate for that position, but don't just reiterate what is listed on your résumé
- Refer to any information specifically requested in a job advertisement that might not be covered in your résumé, such as availability date, or reference to a writing sample

If you are not applying for a specific position:

- State what you know about the organization and how you feel your experience will contribute to its success.

Specifically mention how you learned about the position or organization. If a friend or relative referred you, you should mention that in your cover letter.

Make sure that you do research on the organization. Get on the Internet and find out as much as you can. It is easier to parallel your experience and qualifications to the employer's needs. Make sure you close your letter by stating how you will follow up.

Cover Letter FAQs

What if I don't have the name of the hiring contact?

You can try calling the department and asking for it. Be sure to ask for the correct spelling of the person's last name, and check on the gender so that you can write the appropriate salutation (Dear Ms. or Dear Mr.). You can also try searching for the information on the organization's website.

Do I mention why I'm in the job market?

It may be to your advantage to explain, especially if the reason is outside of your control, such as relocating with your partner, but you are not obligated to do so. You should, however, be prepared to answer that question in an interview.

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Should I email or send a hard copy of my cover letter?

The answer largely depends on the job details and directions for applying. Most employers surveyed prefer online or emailed materials. If hard copies are specifically requested, send them; if not, save a tree. Most employers (Bucknell included) who recruit online exclusively destroy any paper copies, and disregard emails that replicate the information that has already been submitted online.