

## Tips for writing a covering letter

A creative, well-written cover letter is often the best way to make your résumé stand out from the endless sea of applicants and find its way into the “must read” pile of the person making the hiring decisions. Here are 10 simple tips to help you create an impressive cover letter:

1. **Make yourself stand out.** Get the competitive edge by writing a cover letter that focuses on your unique and exceptional qualities. What makes you an ideal candidate? Be strategic, persuasive, and concise.
2. **Target the right person.** Sending your letter to the proper person can make all the difference. Avoid generic addresses such as “To Whom It May Concern” or “Dear Sir or Madam.” Instead, call the company and find out the name and title of the person who does the hiring for the job that you’re interested in. Remember to ask for the correct spelling of his or her name. If you are applying for a specific role, state the job title, reference number and where you saw the ad.
3. **Stay simple.** Keep your cover letter brief. Never send a letter that is more than a page in length; half a page is ideal. Be sure to use clear, professional language while steering away from buzzwords, acronyms, jargon, or anything overly personal.
4. **Make it shine.** The overall visual impression of your cover letter can be just as important as what’s written upon it. Make sure to use crisp, quality stationery. Match the style of copy on your cover letter with the style of your résumé. Stick with one font and avoid solid walls of text that make the reader’s eyes bounce right off the page. Break your text into digestible morsels with lots of white space.
5. **Be an attention getter.** Don’t waste your first paragraph by writing a dull introduction. Grab the employer’s attention from the start by pointing out how you can make a difference in a way no other candidate can. Keep in mind that you have only about one to two seconds to get your initial point across before the reader moves on to the next letter.
6. **Sell yourself.** Don’t expect to wow a prospective employer with a lengthy checklist of what you’ve done in the past. Instead, position your accomplishments in terms of how you could bring the same benefits to their company. Your cover letter needs to answer the question “What’s in it for my company?” Clarify how your expertise will benefit them directly.
7. **Hire a proof reader.** Never underestimate the negative effect of bad writing, which can greatly hurt your chances of landing a new position. Invest in your career by hiring a professional writer or editor to check your cover letter for spelling, grammar, and overall readability.
8. **Avoid exaggeration.** There’s nowhere to hide when you finally land an interview and the prospective employer wants to know what you meant by “best in the world.” Avoid saying anything that sounds like hyperbole, which can project the wrong image and damage your credibility. And remember never to speak poorly of former employers or co-workers.
9. **Close encounters.** Don’t depend on the employer to take action. Request an interview and tell the employer when you will follow up to arrange it. State your availability for interview.
10. **Don’t forget the follow-up.** After sending in your cover letter and résumé, it’s imperative that you follow up. You’ll greatly increase your chances of getting an interview if you call the employer directly after writing, rather than just sitting back and waiting for a call.