

Cover Letters

Washburn University Career Services
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A cover letter is frequently sent with the resume as a part of the application process. Sometimes called a “letter of application,” the cover letter provides the employer with a better understanding of your qualifications and demonstrates your written communication skills. The cover letter should be specifically tailored to the position and the employer; generic letters will not secure an interview.

Customize your cover letter

Your letter should always be addressed to a specific person. Avoid using “Dear Sir or Madam” or “To Whom It May Concern.” Instead, do some research to find the name and title of the human resources contact or individual responsible for the hiring committee. Don’t hesitate to call the company and ask for the name, this will show your initiative and interest in the position. If you are unable to obtain a contact name, use “(Position Title) Search Committee,” or “Director of (fill in department).”

★ Do your research

Obtain a complete job description or detailed position information before writing your cover letter. If the job posting information is not sufficient, contact the company and ask for the job description. In addition, research the organization to gain an understanding of why you want to work for the organization and how you can assist the company.

Assess your skills and qualifications and what you can bring to the organization. Many candidates will have similar academic backgrounds and perhaps even the same types of work experience or internships. Be prepared to describe what sets you apart from other candidates so you will stand out to the hiring committee.

★ Demonstrate the match

Tailor your cover letter to the specific qualifications, abilities, and job functions outlined in the job description. Do not make the employer “guess” how your experiences make you the best candidate for the position; clearly outline your skills and mention specific tasks from the job description that relate to these skills. Pull words and phrases directly from the job description and provide specific examples of how you fulfill these qualifications or display these skills.

★ Proofread and Revise

Check over your cover letter several times for grammatical, punctuation, and spelling errors. Have several others (including Career Services) read over your letter to provide feedback. Perfecting a cover letter can be a tedious task; however, taking the time will help you secure an interview, taking you one step closer to the job offer! Resist the temptation to use the same cover letter for multiple applications; hiring managers can spot a generic cover letter and will not be impressed.

- A cover letter should be one page in length
- If mailing, print your letter on quality bond paper and be sure to sign each letter
- If sending your application via email, include the cover letter in the body of the email and send the resume as an attachment

Cover Letter Guide

Your Address
City, State Zip Code

Date

Contact Person's Name
Title
Employer Name
Street Address
City, State Zip Code

Dear (Ms., Mr., Dr., etc.):

(First Paragraph) Indicate clearly the position or career field you are interested in and why you are writing. If you are applying for a specific position, indicate when and where you learned of the position and briefly express your interest. The first paragraph must attract enough attention for the employer to continue reading. If you were referred, mention the name of the person who referred you.

(Middle Paragraphs) This section may be one, two or even three paragraphs. Mention why you are interested in the position or organization. Elaborate on how your skills, abilities, and experiences qualify you for the position. Relate your academic background and work or other experience to the specific position and express your enthusiasm. Try not to simply repeat what is on your resume, but to expand on your background and personal qualities and mention specific experiences.

(Final Paragraph) In the closing paragraph, refer the reader to the resume and any other enclosures. Refer to your interest in a personal interview and indicate your interest to meet in person to learn more about the position. Indicate how you will follow up; typically by mentioning that you will call to ensure your materials have been received the following week. Include your phone number and email. Thank the employer for their time and consideration. Conclude with "I look forward to speaking with you soon" or a similar statement.

Sincerely,

(Your signature)

Typed Name

You only get one chance to make a positive first impression on a potential employer!
Visit Career Services in Morgan 123 or call 670-1450 to make an appointment.
www.washburn.edu/services/career