About Cover Letters

Cover letters give your resume life and action.
The Resume is a snapshot of YOU. The cover letter is where you fill-in the outlines, shades, shapes, colors and texture that give life and action to the resume. In the cover letter, not the resume, you expand on details that make YOU stand out as a job candidate. A well-written cover letter should “Grab the reader’s attention…generate and hold interest…lead to action.” Your goal is to make the reader “dash straight to your resume…call you for an interview…leave (the reader) wanting more.”

Three Formats to Choose From:
A. In “Straight block” style all lines of type start at the left margin. The sample cover letter uses this format.

B. Another style is “modified indented” setup. The writer’s return address and date are indented slightly to the right of center. “Sincerely” and your name also should be indented at the same tab stop. Everything else should start at the left margin.

C. A third style is the “full-indented” format. Indent as above, but also indent the first line of each paragraph in the body of the letter.

Choose any style, but be consistent. Do not combine styles within any one letter. Above all keep your letter short and sweet. Make your paragraphs succinct. Make every sentence count.

Basic Checklist for Cover Letters

• Address a person (Mr., Ms., Dr., so-and-so), not a title (Personnel Manager, Director, etc.) whenever possible.
• Tailor your letter to the reader as far as is practical. This shows that you have done your homework about the company and the position. It also indicates that you have not sent the same letter to multiple employers.
• Demonstrate interest, energy, and enthusiasm.
• Avoid stuffiness and maintain a balance between professionalism and friendliness.
• Include information about yourself that is relevant to the job you are seeking. Again, this shows that you have done your homework.
• Select 2 or 3 strengths and special skills, targeting their application to the position. Cite examples whenever you mention your strengths or personal skills. Use concise, to-the-point sentences to tell the reader what you did and how well you did it.
• Just as you did with your resume, choose “action verbs with punch.”
• Getting too wordy? If in doubt, cut it out! Leave nothing but facts & action words. You can always go back, take a second look, and restate it during the final proofreading/drafting stage.
• Check your grammar, punctuation and spelling. They should be perfect!
• Use the same quality and color of paper for the letter and resume.
Cover Letters That Knock ‘Em Dead.

Sample Cover Letter

(Do not type your name here)
Your Address
City, State Zip

Date
(The number of spaces between here and the inside address can vary from 4 spaces for a long letter, to 6-10 for a shorter letter).

Ms., Mr., Dr. *
Company/Organization
Department (if known)
Street Address
City, State Zip

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

OPENING PARAGRAPH 1: State why you are writing. Identify yourself as a student at California State University, Chico junior/senior, majoring in xxx. State where you heard about the position (friend, newspaper ad, etc.).

PARAGRAPH 2: Why are you interested in this employer? If they are a well-known prestigious institution, don’t elaborate too much – no need to state the obvious.

PARAGRAPH 3: Why should the employer hire you? Make this paragraph personal. Let them see who you are; don’t be afraid to be an individual. How do you stand out from other classmates? Always provide an example to support your statements.

PARAGRAPH 4: Create an additional paragraph if #3 becomes too long (more than 4-5 sentences). If not, then use #4 as your closing paragraph.

CLOSING PARAGRAPH: State what you want to result from your letter. Say you are looking forward to meeting to discuss your qualifications further. Always close with a thank-you for his/her time, interest or consideration.

Sincerely,

(4 spaces for signature)
Your Name (typed)

Attachments: Resume, Reference page, or other documents requested by employer.