

TOP 5 COVER LETTER TIPS



Do you hate to write cover letters? You aren't alone. Over half the respondents to QTT's job seeker poll dislike writing cover letters more than interviewing or preparing resumes. So what exactly is the purpose of a cover letter and how can writing them be made easier?

Cover letters are the link between your resume and your potential new job. The purpose of a cover letter is to make the hiring person want to learn more about you and bring you in for an interview. Good cover letters highlight your resume, but don't go into too much detail. The interview is the place for the details. In addition, the cover letter can link you with a name or a job ad, getting you through the screening process. If you have gaps in your resume or other "flags," a cover letter is the place to explain them.

So, where does one start to write a cover letter? Below are some guidelines for creating cover letters that get the reader's attention.

1-Tell the reader why you are writing.

List the job for which you are applying, where you learned about it and who referred you to the job, if someone did. For example, "I am interested in the Technical Writer position posted in the August 24 edition of the Wisconsin State Journal" or "I am applying to Technical Writer position posted on your web site. Tom Smith, a software engineer at your firm notified me of the posting."

2-Next, tell the reader how your experience and skills relate to the job.

If you are responding to a job ad, briefly address how your experience relates to each listed task, as shown in the example below. "During the past six years, I have written, edited, and designed publications that translate technical and scientific information into articles and reference materials that audiences can easily use and understand. I am very familiar with FrameMaker, PageMaker, and Microsoft Word since I use all three packages to produce various types of publications such as manuals, newsletters, and booklets."

3-If necessary, address any issues on your resume that may be red flags.

For example, perhaps you were only employed at a firm six months before the company conducted mass layoffs. You could state something to the effect of, "you may note on my resume that I was only employed for XYZ for a short time. My position was eliminated due to a company-wide reduction in force." This notifies the reader that you left the job through no fault of your own, not because you are a job hopper.

4-Finally, tell them one more time why you are perfect for this job and describe the next step.

For example, "In summary, my experience, skills, and education match the requirements posted for this job. I have enclosed my resume for your review. Should you require additional information, please feel free to contact me. I look forward to hearing from you and learning more about your organization."

5. Once you have the letter written, there are a few presentation details to keep in mind to give your letter a polished look.

- Type the letter and use a business-type font, preferably one that matches your resume.
- Use standard business letter format.
- Make sure your cover letter (and resume) are free of grammatical and spelling errors.

It is well worth the effort to write a good cover letter. Generally, once you've written a cover letter, you can use it for many jobs. You just need to tweak it for each job so that it looks like you wrote it specifically for that job. A good cover letter should sell your resume and get you in the door for that interview.