

THE COVER LETTER: FIRST IMPRESSIONS ARE EVERYTHING!



Some people think they can get away with submitting a resume, without including a cover letter. These people are usually referred to as "unemployed." Of course you need a cover letter, even if a job ad doesn't specifically ask for one. (On the rare occasion when you are asked *not* to send one, then don't!) Including a cover letter that has clearly been personalized for the specific company and position tells the employer you care enough to take the time. Also, the cover letter is the first thing an employer sees. It's your introduction. Don't mess it up! **Never send a generic cover letter.** Sure, you may have some basic text you always include. But be sure to mention the company and the position by name in the body of the cover letter. And tweak the description of your experience and skills to match the requirements of the particular position. Use the same wording as the job ad. **Mention how you learned about the job.** If it was passed along by a person at the firm, then name that person. **Describe the most important aspects of your skills and experience that pertain to this position.** This is how you convince the employer to take a real look at your resume. Also, resumes are very formally structured -- here's your chance to lay out, in plain English, exactly why you're right for the job. **Reflect your attitude.** If you're excited about the position, then tell them! The cover letter is also your opportunity to demonstrate that you are a professional person -- by writing a very professional cover letter. Typos, misspellings, bad grammar, and a casual tone will not help you. **Provide anything else mentioned in the job ad.** This may include a salary history, or a writing sample, or a link to your web site. (You don't have your own web site? Hey, they also have this new thing called a "horseless carriage," you should look into it. Also, did you know they cured polio?) Be sure to explicitly follow every instruction in the job ad. **If attaching files to an email as documents, keep your resume.doc and your coverletter.doc separate.** Don't combine them. This goes for uploads to company job sites as well. Got any cover letter advice of your own to share? Let us know in the comments!