

Cover Letter Guide

What is it?

A cover letter is a well-crafted, professional letter that accompanies a résumé. It is considered a formal communication which serves as an introduction of you and your qualifications to a prospective employer. Résumés are often read before letters, so the goal is to provide the employer with the incentive to invite you for an interview.

Why do I need one?

Cover letters are written when you are aware that an opening exists and you wish to address your specific attributes which qualify you. It is an extension of your résumé that offers the chance to go more in depth about certain experiences that will differentiate you from other applicants. Another type of cover letter is a letter of inquiry, in which you are unaware of any specific vacancies, but want to establish your interest in opportunities which may become available with a particular employer.

Should I have more than one?

Yes! Just like résumés, cover letters should be personalized to the specific position and organization you are applying to. Cover letters give you an opportunity to express why you're the best candidate for that position. You will want to reflect different qualities and achievements depending on the application.

What are some Career Development resources?

- Cover letter templates
- Cover letter beginner's worksheet

All can be found in office and on www.geneseo.edu/career_development

What are some tips?

Accompanied with résumé

A cover letter should always be sent with a résumé. Since the résumé is typically read first, do not repeat all your information onto your cover letter. This wastes space that should be designated to *explaining* your qualifications, instead of stating them.

Length

Cover letters are not autobiographies. The goal is to keep your letter short enough to sustain the interest of the reader while best expressing your qualifications. With this being said, it should be kept to one page.

Appearance

Appearance is very important when making a first impression. Do not use harsh colors, stick to black. Format the letter in paragraph form. Break it up into 2-3 paragraphs to make it easier to read. Have someone proofread your letter for errors, awkward phrases, etc. Your letter must be accurate, attractive and error-free.

Language

Unlike a résumé, use personal pronouns in a cover letter since you are explaining your qualifications. Also, personalize the letter whenever possible. For example, mention the name of the organization in the body of your letter rather than referring to "your organization". When discussing your relevant experiences, it can help to think about not only what you've done, but how well you've done it.

Paper/Printing

If printing, use high quality bond paper in the same color as your résumé. If sending electronically, also convert the Word document to a PDF.

Addressed to

Your letter must be directed to a specific person and reflect that person's correct title. It is appropriate to call the organization's human resources office to ask for the correct name and title. If necessary, refer to a person's title, ex. 'Dear Human Resource Director', do not use 'Dear Sir/Madam'.

Contact

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Office Hours

M-F: 8am-4:30pm

Walk-in Hours

Located on website
geneseo.edu/career_development

Remember, your cover letter, résumé and reference page are typically your first introduction to an employer and their presentation makes a statement about you. Are you neat, organized, do you use your words well and with impact, are your sentences coherent and enlightening? Take the time and care to make a strong impression!