

Cover Letter Checklist

Overall Format and Editing

- I wrote one page in correct business letter format: left justified, no indents starting paragraphs, single-spaced, line breaks between paragraphs and sections, 10-12 pt font.
- I had at least two people review the letter for spelling, errors and to make sure it is tailored to the opportunity.
- The tone is confident and positive, showing genuine interest and highlighting my abilities. It is not boastful; it is not negative about me or the company.

My Address Block or Header (2-4 lines)

- My name, address (optional), city, state and ZIP code (optional), phone number, and professional email address are included in my header, each on its own line with no spaces between lines.
- I placed my header in one of three locations: 1) at the top of the letter before the date, formatted identical to my résumé header, 2) at the top of the letter before the date, formatted as a left justified block or 3) at the bottom of the letter below my signature, formatted as a left justified block.
- I left one line of space between my header and the date or start of the letter.

Date Format

- I positioned the date at the top of the page before the organization's address (format: September 14, 20XX).

Employer/Organization Address (3-4 lines)

- I included the name and title (if known) of the individual I am sending the letter to.
- I included the name of the organization.
- I included the street address with city, state and ZIP code of the organization. All lines are in a left-justified block.

Salutation (1 line)

- I used a standard business letter greeting: 'Dear' and then either first last name or title (Dr./Mr./Ms.) and last name, followed by a colon (e.g., Dear Dr. Wu: or Dear Jamie Phelps:).
- When I didn't know the name of the individual, I used a title as a substitute (Dear Hiring Manager, Dear Human Resources Manager); I avoided using 'To Whom It May Concern.'

Introduction (1 paragraph)

- I identified the position for which I am applying. I specified if I was referred by a person (called out by name), have had any connection to the organization or notable interactions with recruiters/employees.
- I briefly highlighted why I am interested in the position and organization.
- I demonstrated my strengths to the reader in a summary of one-to-two-line powerful statements.

Main Body (2-3 paragraphs)

- I identified my strongest/most relevant qualifications, skills and abilities. I answered, 'Why should they hire me?'
- I avoided repeating a list of skills from my résumé. I wrote a narrative with details and results I achieved to provide compelling evidence and examples to supplement my résumé.
- I incorporated keywords and phrases from the position description and/or organization's website.
- I elaborated on why I am interested in the position, company/organization, industry and/or location.
- I focused the letter on the organization's needs and what I offer, not what I want to get from them.
- I avoided self-deprecating language or anything that questions my value or qualifications as a candidate.

Closing (1 short paragraph)

- I thanked the reader for taking time to read the letter.
- I reinforced my desire to work for the organization and my fit for the position.
- I identified next steps (availability for interview) and/or described how I will follow up with the employer.

Signature

- I ended the letter with a conventional closing such as 'Sincerely' or 'Best regards' followed by a comma.
- I included my first and last name 3-4 spaces down from the closing. If I submit a paper copy, I'll write my signature within this space above my name.