



# Cover Letter Writing

Guidelines & Advice

created by Jamie Morgen Phillips

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## General guidelines

- No longer than 2 pages
- 11 pt font minimum
- Use the same font as your resume
- Make good use of white space for extra readability
- Keep your paragraphs short
- Write in past tense and keep the same tense throughout
- Keep it clear, concise, and easy to read
- You can use bullet points sparingly to make lists easier on the eyes.

The best piece of advice I can give you is to structure and write your cover letter the same way you would a persuasive essay. Write a clear thesis statement, evidence-based arguments with strong examples, and a conclusion that highlights why your expertise fits the organization's work and goals.

### **Thesis statement**

An introductory paragraph on why you are interested in the role, why you'd like to work with this organization, and a quick summary of the expertise you would bring.

### **Body**

Using the key requirements from the job specification as headings, provide evidence on how you meet each specification.

Show don't tell: Use specific examples from your work experience – the more recent, the better – to illustrate your expertise, instead of just stating that you have experience with X. Keep it strictly relevant to the role to which you're applying.

Tip: Create a generic cover letter outline and template for the categories of roles you're applying to (e.g., communications, finance, humanitarian work) and then tailor it to each specific application.

The goal of your resume is to outline how you're qualified for the role. The cover letter is where you contextualize your resume with evidence and background information. And the goal of your application is to show that you meet the requirements and make the hiring manager want to bring you in for an interview. Meaning you don't have to write about absolutely everything you have ever done. It's to get them interested in you and want to talk to you more. Use your best, most relevant and impressive examples. And be you – give them a sense of who you are, what you're about and what you're like to work with.

Your cover letter is where you can tell the story of your work self: history, passions, and aspirations. Humans respond to narratives. Your cover letter will stand out and draw the reader in if you can combine your unique story with specific and relevant evidence that has a clear, concise and easy to read structure.

### **Conclusion**

Dedicate the last paragraph before your sign off to why you are interested in working with this organization. Do a little research on their website, look at their values, mission statement, past and current projects, etc., and relate one or two of these to your expertise and aspirations. Circle back to the topics you raised in your introduction and briefly sum up the body of your letter.