



Parts of a Cover Letter

The content of all cover letters follows a certain, standardized format. Be sure to read our article on parts of a cover letter.

- ✓ The salutation in your letter should be to a specific person. A cover letter written to “To Whom It May Concern” will go right in the circular file. Try and get the name of the person you will be working for and direct your cover letter to him or her. One way to do this is simply calling the company and asking for the name of the person in charge of that department. (If the job listing says “no calls,” be sure to avoid giving your name when you make this call.)
- ✓ Begin your letter with a short first paragraph that explains how you learned of the job opening and describes your interest in the job. For example, *I learned of your open position for a secretary through your ad in the Denver Post*; or, *Jim Smith recently informed me that you had an opening for a salesperson*. (If you have a personal contact, use it. A person’s name is always the best option.) Then continue: *I believe I am extremely well qualified for this position and I am enclosing my resume for your approval*.
- ✓ The second, third and fourth (if needed) paragraphs should detail your experience that qualifies you for the job. Look at the want ad or job listing. In your letter, comment on each of the desired qualifications or required experience. Use specific examples when possible. For example, *While I was at Success Inc., I developed a system for managing the company’s policies and procedures. The practices I put in place saved \$15,000 in the first year*. Use separate paragraphs to cover each major concept, set of experiences or desired qualifications.

The point of these paragraphs is to cover as many bases as you can, so that when the reader evaluates you, he or she will be confident you and the job are a perfect fit. Your letter should be no more than two pages, but should go into as much detail as possible; its length will depend upon how much you can learn about the company and the job opening.

- ✓ In the closing paragraph, let the reader know you are excited about working in that position or at that company. Don’t believe the myth that you shouldn’t appear overanxious when you look for a job. All employers want you to be excited about the prospect of working for them.
- ✓ End the letter by writing that you plan to call the reader “next week” to set up an interview. (This is not always possible, since you may be responding to a blind ad with no specific contact information.)