

Cover Letter Accompanying a Resume or Application

What is a cover letter?

A cover letter is a short letter that accompanies a resume when applying for a job or internship. Depending on the application requirements it may be submitted on paper, via email, uploaded to an online software, or pasted into a text box on an online application. The cover letter is essentially a paper version of a sales pitch. You are convincing the recruiter or hiring manager to move you forward to an interview. The only time a cover letter should not be included is when a job ad clearly says to *not* include one, and that is very rare.

How is a cover letter different from a resume?

A **resume** is a document that summarizes the jobs you have held, the education you have attained, certifications, skills and other quantifiable information about your background as it relates to the job for which you are applying.

A **cover letter** is used to provide the employer with additional information as to why you are a good candidate for the job. The cover letter is the place to convey subjective information such as the basis of your interest in the position, how your values motivate you to pursue the job, or why the culture of a company appeals to you.

Purpose of a cover letter

Many people make the mistake of essentially “copy-pasting” information from their resume into their cover letter. This is the wrong approach. While it is good to reference education, work history or other related experiences that are listed on your resume, you need to provide additional information that could not be gleaned simply by reading your resume such as:

- **Your knowledge of the organization.** By mentioning the organization’s mission/values, recent accomplishments or unique characteristics, you are actually clueing them in to two things: first, you did your research, and second, you spent extensive time on this cover letter (it was not just a mass email).
- **Your genuine interest in the organization and position.** A resume cannot accomplish this like a cover letter can. While a resume demonstrates your ability to do the job, a cover letter demonstrates things like your motivation to do the job and your excitement about the organization.
- **Connections you have within the company.** If someone you know is serving as an internal reference for you, be sure to mention his or her first and last name, department and how you know them in the first paragraph! This will catch the recruiter’s eye and likely cause them to give your resume a deeper look.
- **Your persuasive writing abilities.** While your resume should demonstrate your attention to detail, it does not demonstrate your ability to write professionally or persuasively. Your cover letter will give the recruiter a really good idea as to how well you communicate in writing.
- **How your “unique mix” would add value.** Sometimes your previous experience is not *directly* related to the job for which you are applying. In the cover letter, you can highlight ways that your experiences actually developed you and conveyed transferable skills you possess that are needed for the job.



Dear Mr. Jones:

I would like to express my interest in an entry-level analyst position with Company. In conversations with John Doe, Director of Marketing at Company, I have come to respect the professionalism that characterizes your firm and its employees. I am confident that the Company team's values and objectives would highly complement my own strengths and enthusiasm. I would like to be considered for your Investment Banking Analyst Program, or a similar position that requires refined analytical and communication skills.

I was impressed to learn of Company's recent acquisition of Hambrecht Group, a tactic which I see as indicative of Company's commitment to achieving growth and success in the future. Innovative and exciting approaches such as this, coupled with Company's highly regarded Analyst Program, convinced me that Company is the ideal environment to begin my business career. Evidence of my leadership and analytical skills can be seen in my responsibilities as analyst intern at Company, and my commitment to my academics. My educational background in government and business, combined with my internship experiences, has been excellent preparation for a career with Company.

Please review the enclosed resume and references and consider my application for your Investment Banking Analyst program. I would appreciate the opportunity to meet with you and explore the company environment, as well as possible job opportunities at Company. I will call your office next week to discuss these possibilities. I look forward to exchanging ideas with you concerning a career at Company and the positive contributions I would offer as a member of your organization. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,
(signature)
John K. Smith

Example cover letter Basic Outline

Greeting

Or "To whom it concerns," "Dear Human Resources Team," etc.

1st paragraph

1. State purpose and/or position seeking
2. Use name and department of internal reference (if applicable)
3. Short explanation of why you are a good fit

Middle paragraph(s)

1. Compliment the company
 - Demonstrate that you have researched the company & position
2. You + company
 - Demonstrate fit and/or why you are interested
3. Brag!
 - Demonstrate work ethic, skills, credentials, other things that make you a good fit and you could not communicate on the resume

Final paragraph

1. Reference the resume (and other attachments if applicable)
2. Take charge by stating what you will do next
3. Explore potential meeting/interview
4. 4. Express gratitude

Signature

It is a nice touch to sign your name, scan and send the document to yourself and then submit as a PDF to the employer