

Writing a Cover Letter

You should always include a cover letter when sending a resume to an employer. Each cover letter should be tailored for its recipient. This will make your cover letter stand out, and show that you know something about the organization and how your skills will make you a valuable addition.

It is easiest to write a cover letter when you are applying for a specific advertised position. This allows you to specifically target those qualifications you have which make you a good candidate for the position. If you are unsure as to what employment opportunities are available within an organization, but know that you are interested in working for them then you should describe the type of position you are interested in and discuss the “fit” between this and your qualifications. In this case you will need to do much more research about an organization to make some more informed guesses as to what you would like to do for/with them and whether or not your background is relevant.

Here are some ideas for how to research organizations:

- Employer website
- Employer literature
- Talking to people about the organization

Do not submit mass-produced “form” letters. Each letter you send should be tailored to the recipient (and the position if known). You may find that some key statements or sentences can be used time and again, but for the most part each cover letter should be individually written.

The Basic Format

Your Street address
City, state, zip [written this way: Philadelphia, PA 19104]
E-mailed address [optional]
Today's date

Ms. Ann James
Director of Human Resources
Acme Labs
College Relations Building 202-2
Shermer. IL 54265

Dear Ms. James:

In the opening paragraph, state why you are writing; that is, identify the specific position you are applying for, and mention how you learned about it. Also, identify your school, major, and you year in school (or when you expect to graduate, if that will be soon).

In the middle paragraph(s) [one or two], explain why you are interested in working for this employer, and point out your achievements or qualifications in this field, especially those that meet the job description or requirements. Highlight a few important points from your resume, providing more detail about experiences that will be of particular interest. Also, describe some personal characteristics that would be assets in the position that you want.

In the closing paragraph, you should pave the way for an interview by indicating how your can be reached. You can ask for an appointment or offer to call the employer in the near future.

Sincerely,
[Your signature goes here]
Your name [typed]

Enclosure [This refers to the resume that would be included in the envelope.]

What do you do if you don't know the name of the person to whom you are writing?

1. *If you know the person's job title. (e.g. Director of Human Resources), you can write to the person in that position (e.g. **Dear Director:**) or you can substitute an attention line for the "Dear" line (e.g. **Attention: Director of Human Resources**).*

2. *If you don't even know the job title, substitute a subject line for the "Dear" line (e.g., **Subject: Pharmacy Internship**).*

A Sample Cover Letter

600 S. 43rd Street
Philadelphia, PA 19104
jstudent@usip.edu

Ms. Ann James
Director of Human Resources
Acme Labs
College Relations Building 202-2
Shermer, IL 54265

February 16, 2005

Dear Ms. James,

I am writing to express my interest in the Laboratory Technician position listed on the Acme Labs human resources web page. I will be graduating from University of the Sciences in Philadelphia in May with a Bachelor of Science in Pharmaceutical Sciences.

I feel that my combination of experience and education make me an ideal candidate for this position. During my junior and senior years at University of the Sciences in Philadelphia I have worked as a Laboratory Assistant and Teaching Assistant for several faculty members here at the university. In addition, I have completed a summer research-based internship with Merck. In addition, I have held leadership positions in several on campus organizations. I am certain that my research background combined with my leadership skills will help me to make an immediate contribution to Acme Labs and to be come an integral part of the organization.

I am eager to learn more about this opportunity and look forward to speaking with you. I can be reached by phone at 267-555-1111 or by email at jstudent@usip.edu. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
John Q. Student
enclosures