

JOB SEARCH TIP SERIES

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STATE REP. DAN DEASY

COVER LETTERS

TIPS FOR COVER LETTERS:

1. **Do not repeat your resume.** Do not use the cover letter to put your resume into paragraph form. Your cover letter is to show curiosity, personality and an interest in the field in which you are applying.
2. **Keep it short.** Your cover letter should be around three paragraphs.
3. **Follow a standard business letter format.**
4. **Make sure your cover letter is addressing someone.** Do not use phrases such as “To Whom it May Concern,” or “Dear Hiring Manager.” Address it to an individual; if you do not know whom to address it to, use the job title of the recipient, such as, “Maintenance Supervisor,” or “Office Manager.”
5. **Send your cover letter and resume as a PDF file.** Not every computer can read Word documents or page documents, but every computer can read PDF files. This also ensures that no one can change the information on your cover letter or resume.
6. **End strong.** Finish off your cover letter quickly by explaining how your experience or views will help you at the job.

CONTENT OF COVER LETTER:

- **Heading and Greeting:**
 - The beginning of your cover letter should include the date, your name and your contact information. Address your cover letter to a specific person when possible. If you do not have an individual’s name use the job title of the recipient, such as, “Maintenance Supervisor,” “Office Manager,” “Human Resources,” or “Search Committee.”
- **Opening and Introduction:**
 - Start your letter with a “hook” that lists specific personal traits, skills or knowledge that make you a unique fit for the position. Explain who you are and your reason for writing, including how you found out about the position. If someone told you about the position, this is where you should refer to them. Use the first paragraph to express your energy, enthusiasm, skills, education and work experience that could contribute to the employer’s success.
- **Body:**
 - Sell yourself. Reveal why you are a perfect and unique match for the position. Tell them why your skills, interests and values are a fit for the job. Explain why you have chosen the employer, and briefly summarize your talents, experience and achievements.
- **Closing Paragraph:**
 - Thank the reader for his/her time. Let them know when you will be following up with him/her. If you will be visiting the area on a specific time, let them know the specific date and if you are available. Use an appropriate closing such as “Sincerely.”

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TYPES OF COVER LETTERS:

Cover letters can serve different purposes for different situations.

- **Application Letter.** A letter is written to apply for a specific job opening.
- **Referral Cover Letter.** A referral cover letter mentions the name of a person who referred you to a job.
- **Networking Letter.** Networking letters request job search advice and assistance.
- **Letter of Interest.** A letter of interest, also known as a prospecting letter, inquires about a possible job opening at a company.
- **Value Proposition Letter.** A value proposition is a brief statement explaining what makes the candidate unique.

Your address
City, Province
Postal Code
Phone Number
Email
Date

Employer's name
Title
Name of Business
Street Address
City, Province
Postal Code

Dear _____ :

First Paragraph: This paragraph should arouse the interest of a potential employer. State why you are writing, how you heard of the opening, and why you are interested in the organization.

Second Paragraph: This paragraph should create a desire to read further. Refer the reader to the enclosed resume and give additional information concerning your background and interests. Demonstrate how your interests, education, and experience for the job requirements. Describe 1 or 2 qualifications you think would be of interest to the employer, keeping in mind the employer's point of view. If you have related experience or specialized training, be sure to point it out. Do not make the common mistake of saying "I'd like a position so I can gain experience in my field," show the employer what you will be able to do for the organization.

Third paragraph: Ask for action. Be assertive about requesting an interview. State your availability. Give a phone number and time you can be reached or state that you will call.

Sincerely,

Your typed name
Enclosure (Indicates a resume or application is included in the package)

MISTAKES WITH COVER LETTERS:

- Sending your resume without a cover letter.
- Failing to address your cover letter to a specific person or recipient.
- Allowing typos, misspellings or grammar mistakes in your letter.
- Telling the employer what the company can do for you instead of what you can do for the company.
- Being boring and formulaic.
- Rehashing your resume.
- Using weak language.
- Failing to tailor your letter to the job for which you are applying.
- Making the cover letter too long and including unneeded information.