

COVER LETTERS

Cover letters should not be more than one page. Substitute short words for long words. Common action words communicate quickly and are easy to understand. State facts and use verbs that demonstrate an action (accomplished, achieved, administered, completed, contributed, demonstrated, established, facilitated, implemented, performed, prioritized, streamlined, wrote, etc.) You can also use a short phrase ending in a colon:

Followed by bullets of information

Each one supporting the original phrase

Use a business-like font. Use italics, underline phrases, bold or capitalize items for emphasis. Use the same quality paper for your cover letter, resume and envelope – white or cream color is preferable. Use one staple in the upper left hand corner. Make sure that your personal data and contact information (name, address, etc.) is on your cover letter and every page of your resume.

Omit references to reasons for leaving a particular job. You may be asked for reasons in your interview but they are not relevant in the cover letter.

Omit all references to past, current or desired salaries. If you must list a salary history, it should go in the cover letter. It should never be in the resume. Don't restrict yourself to one figure; instead, give yourself a range with a spread between the low and high end.

“My salary requirements are in the \$_____ to \$_____ range, with appropriate benefits. I would be willing to relocate for the right opportunity.”

Avoid listing irrelevant responsibilities or job titles. Leave out lists of references – mention the availability of references upon request. Do mention your contributions, achievements and the problems you successfully solved during your projects. Bring attention to your merits.

Personal Profile

To project a personal profile, use these words and phrases if they apply:

Drive – Goal-oriented, desire to get things done
Motivation – Enthusiasm and willingness to ask questions
Communication Skills – Ability to talk and write well (good spelling)
Chemistry – Wears a smile, confident and gets along with others
Energy – Gives that extra effort in little things as well as important matters
Determination – Someone who does not back off when a problem arises
Confidence – Neither intimidated by or overly familiar with executives

Traits to Project to Identify You as Loyal, Reliable and Trustworthy:

Reliability, Dependability

Honesty/Integrity

Pride (Always making sure a job is done to the best of your abilities)

Dedication

Listening Skills

Analytical Skills

Resourcefulness, Efficiency

Adaptability

The goal is to draw attention to as many of these traits as possible by direct statement, inference or illustration.

An Employer has Five Concerns:

Ability and Suitability

Willingness to go the extra yard

Manageability

Problem-Solving Attitude

Supportive Behavioral Traits

A Cover Letter should accomplish 3 things:

Identify why you are sending your resume

Identify why the reader should read the resume

Ask for the Interview or Next Contact

A Basic Checklist

Address a person, not a title

Be tailored to the reader as far as practical to show you have done your homework – check out a company's website

Show concern, interest and pride for your profession

Demonstrate energy and enthusiasm

Cut to the chase; be brief and to the point

Avoid stuffiness and maintain a balance between professionalism and friendliness

Include information relevant to the job you are seeking

Ask for the next step in the process clearly and without apology or arrogance

Email Cover Letters

Email cover letters need to be even shorter and more concise than those on paper. A professional tone should be maintained when communicating with prospective employers. Use it wisely – you don't want to leave a bad impression. Apply the following rules to every email you write:

Use a meaningful subject header for your email – one that is appropriate to the topic

Always be professional and businesslike in your correspondence. Address the recipient as Mr., Mrs. or Ms., and always verify the correct spelling of the recipient's name.

Be Brief in your communications. Don't overload the employer with lots of questions in your email.

Do not use happy face symbols or other such symbols in your email communications with business people.

Do not use strange fonts, wallpapers or multicolored backgrounds.

Sign your email with your full name.

Avoid using slang.

Be sure to proofread and spell-check your email before sending it. Such emails can send the message that you are unprofessional or unqualified.

When you are dealing with employers, there is no such thing as an inconsequential communication. Your emails say far more about you than you might realize. It is important to always present a polished, professional image – even if you are just emailing your phone number and a time when you can be contacted. Use the guidelines above to give yourself an advantage over other job-seekers who are unaware of how to converse professionally through email.