

# Tips for a Powerful Cover Letter

Ah, the dreaded cover letter. Regardless of how much it hurts to write them, hiring managers do read cover letters. To them, it demonstrates your written communications skills, your interest and research on the company, and can peak their interest in you over other candidates. So, yes, cover letters are important. Here are some tips to make yours great:

**TIP:** There are several styles of cover letters. Pick one that fits you.

**TIP:** PROOF it before you send it. Read it out loud to yourself. Read it again and again. It must be “typo-free”.

## 1. **Don't restate your resume.**

Your resume is about you. The cover letter is about how you can help the company and fit right into their culture.

## 2. **Address to a specific person, if at all possible.**

It is always best to address your cover letter to a specific person. Ideally, this is the hiring manager. Research this person's name. If you can't find that name, use the head of the department or the Human Resource Manager's name, or “Dear Hiring Committee”- something that shows you are addressing a specific audience.

## 3. **Customize your letter to each company and job.**

Hiring managers don't want generic, mass-mailed letters. Research the company. Tailor this new information, even including some of their wording, in your cover letter. It's all right to use another letter or a template as a starting point, but each letter you write should be customized for that company and that specific job. Hiring managers will toss generic letters as a waste of their time.

## 4. **Connect the dots from what you have done to what you will do for the company.**

Don't make the letter about you, but about how you can help the company. One way of doing this is to rephrase your sentences that begin with I to address the company's needs.

## 5. **Be real and not overly exuberant for the job.**

Honest and genuine writing goes a long way in reaching the hiring manager. Be original and not generic in your sentences. Don't be too formal but also don't be over the top excited about it either. Phrases like “absolutely thrilled” or “very excited to apply for..” are over done. There is a happy medium. You just need to find it.

## 6. **Use your action words.**

The cover letter is no place to be passive. Use action words to show your achievements.

## 7. **Highlight the skills and experiences in the job description.**

Whether screened by a person or a computer, they seek specific skills and experience. Use the words they use. One suggestion is to highlight key words directly on the job description and to use those words in your letter.

## 8. **Keep it short.**

Cover letters should be easy to scan. One page is best. In fact, many experts advise three succinct paragraphs. Hiring managers get hundreds of letters. Make it easy for them to see and read yours.

## 9. **Consider what you are missing. Draw attention to what you do bring to the table.**

If the employer has requirements that you don't have, consider addressing this head-on, with reasons they should consider you anyway. If, for example, you are missing a degree or certificate they require, point out your experience and past successes. Then request an interview and a chance to explain or discuss it.

## 10. **Use bullet points or the T format to highlight some specific information.**

Bullet pointed lists can pull out or highlight important information and make them easier to read or scan. Use this when you are talking about your skills and accomplishments that will benefit the company.

## 11. **Include contact information in your signature.**

Include your contact information in your signature instead of listing it at the top of the message. Include a phone number and professional email—the same that is on your resume.