

7 Tips to Creating a Strong Cover Letter

1) CONTACT INFO IS HIGH AND EASY TO FIND

Burying your email address or phone number in the body of the letter will make it difficult for the reader to find it if s/he is looking for it.

2) ADDRESSES READER BY NAME

Letters addressed to “Whom it May Concern” is the kiss of death of a cover letter. Starting this way tells the reader that, a) you didn’t break a sweat to find out to whom you are writing, and b) you might be sending out the same letter to tons of other companies (the dreaded “cookie cutter” letter!). Do your best to find a name. If you come up empty in your search for the specific hiring manager, try to find the name of the president, CEO or head of the department. That will show some effort and can’t hurt your application.

3) LISTS A REFERENCE IN FIRST LINE

Including a mention of a reference (someone at the company you spoke with/know, or who referred you) gives the employer more of a reason to want to read your letter. You immediately establish that though he/she/they may not know you personally, someone he/she/they knows does. List a reference if possible. (If you don’t have a reference, an accomplishment statement will do: **See the CDC’s other cover letter handouts for examples!**)

4) SHORT AND SWEET, BUT PACKED WITH DETAIL

The reader leaves with a clear sense of why this candidate is viable for the job or internship without having to wade through lots of text. If you detail those things that relate to what the employer is looking for in a clear and concise way, you will demonstrate why you are qualified and that you are savvy about what the position entails. Your cover letter should highlight the things you bring to the table that most relate to the position you’re applying for; **it should not be a list of everything that’s on your résumé.**

5) SHOWS INSTEAD OF TELLS

Don’t write about skills you can’t backup. If you write that you are great at multi-tasking, researching, and working in a fast-paced environment, by provide the reader no proof by giving examples then it is just fluff. Make sure you provide examples from your experiences that allow the reader to *see* you exhibiting these skills in his/her/their head, which will be convince them your claims are based in fact not fiction.

6) KEEPS THE FOCUS ON THE EMPLOYER

Employers want to hear why you would be of value, not why an internship/job at the company would help your career, fulfill your lifelong dream, etc. Frame ALL your phrasing around what YOU bring to the table.

7) DOESN’T GIVE THE EMPLOYER HOMEWORK

If you want the job so badly, YOU should be the one who puts effort into the follow-up. Closing with proactive language will show the employer how interested you are in the position and will keep the ball in your court so you have reason to be back in touch. Better for you to call to follow up than to sit in your dorm, crossing your fingers and wondering if the employer will get in touch with you.

