



How to Write a Cover Letter for Your Résumé

A cover letter introduces your application and explains how your experience connects to a particular job. It gives you space to show why the opportunity interests you and expand on your most relevant qualifications.

The basic approach is the same for email and paper: write a focused, professional message tailored to the employer. The main differences are formatting and delivery.

Start With the Employer's Needs

Read the job announcement and identify two or three priorities. Then choose examples from your background that demonstrate your ability to meet them.

Research the organization enough to explain your interest specifically. Avoid generic praise or claims that you are the “perfect candidate.” Let your examples establish your suitability.

Keep the letter concise—usually three or four short paragraphs and no more than one page. Harvard's [résumé and cover letter guide](#) recommends tailoring the letter to the organization and highlighting one or two relevant examples.

Organize the Letter Into Three Parts

Opening: Identify the position and briefly explain your interest. Introduce the qualification that most clearly connects you to the role.

Middle: Develop one or two examples of relevant work. Explain what you did and what you achieved. Add context to your résumé rather than repeating its bullet points word for word.

Closing: Refer the reader to your résumé, reaffirm your interest, welcome an opportunity to discuss your qualifications, and thank the reader for considering your application.

Address the recipient by name when you can verify it. Otherwise, “Dear Hiring Manager” is an appropriate greeting.

Use Specific, Natural Language

Write in a confident, courteous tone. Choose concrete descriptions over phrases such as “results-driven professional” or “excellent team player.”

For example, a training role might call for this kind of evidence:

In my previous position, I developed an onboarding checklist and coached new employees through their first weeks on the job.

Include numbers when they are reliable and useful. Keep every claim consistent with your résumé and actual experience.

Refer to Your Résumé

Briefly direct the reader to your résumé, usually near the closing. Choose wording that matches how you are submitting it:

- **Email attachment:** “My attached résumé provides further details about my experience and qualifications.”
- **Paper enclosure:** “My enclosed résumé provides further details about my experience and qualifications.”
- **Separate online upload:** “My résumé provides further details about my experience and qualifications.”

If both your cover letter and résumé are email attachments, the brief accompanying email can mention both: “Attached are my cover letter and résumé for the Office Coordinator position.”

Use “attached” or “enclosed” only when it accurately describes how the résumé is being delivered.

Format a Paper Letter Professionally

Use a conventional business-letter layout: your contact information, the date, the recipient’s name and business address, a greeting, the body, and a closing.

Match the résumé’s font and general appearance. Leave space to sign above your typed name when printing the letter for mailing. You may also add “Enclosure: Résumé” beneath your signature block.

Keep the layout simple and easy to read.

Adapt the Format for Email

Follow the employer's submission instructions first. If no separate cover-letter attachment is requested, you can use the email body as your cover letter. [CareerOneStop's cover-letter guidance](#) recognizes this approach.

Use a clear subject line, such as *Application: Office Coordinator — Jordan Lee*, adding a job reference number if requested. Begin with a professional greeting, use short paragraphs, and end with your name, phone number, and email address. Postal address blocks and a handwritten signature are unnecessary.

If the employer requests an attached cover letter, use a business-letter document and write a brief email introducing the attached materials. There is no need to repeat the entire letter in the email. Use the requested file format; PDF is a practical option when none is specified.

Check Before Sending

Proofread the employer's name, job title, and contact details. Confirm that attachments are included, clearly named, and open correctly. For a paper application, check that the résumé is enclosed before sealing the envelope.

Whether delivered electronically or on paper, a strong cover letter makes one thing easy to understand: how your experience prepares you to contribute to this particular employer.