

Cover Letter Format and Purpose

Your Present Address
City, State Zip Code

(This is the formal business letter format used for cover letters)

Date of Letter

(Note there are two blank lines between each section of this heading)

Individual's Name
Job Title
Employer Name
Street Address
City, State Zip Code

(Include Ms. /Mr. /Dr.; if unknown use Human Resources)

(Call employers for correct spelling of name, title, etc., if necessary)
(Employer address, city, state, zip are optional for online applications, but at least use the employer name)

Dear Ms./Mr./Dr. Last Name:

(If unknown, use Dear Hiring Representative,)

Introductory paragraph addresses three questions:

- How did you hear of the position?
- Why do you want to work for that specific company/organization?
 - (Stay away from general answers or aspects focused on you- be specific)
- What knowledge, skills, abilities, or achievements (KSAs) qualify you for that position?
 - Usually the last sentence (Think of this as a thesis statement)
 - Mention 2-3 and then focus on them in the body of the letter

Detail paragraph(s) provide(s) your strongest connection/example of how your experience relates to the position:

- Discuss KSAs in the order they are listed in the introductory paragraph
- Provide evidence of the KSAs listed in introductory paragraph from related work or academic experience
- Use concrete examples, active voice, and action verbs; vary sentence structure and length
- Explain how you can benefit that company and what value you can add, not what they can do for you
- If you have two strong ideas to present, break this into two shorter paragraphs
- Shorter items are more likely to be read; longer ones get skimmed or even skipped altogether
- Be brief (A cover letter is shorter than a full single page)

Closing paragraph:

- Thank them for the opportunity and indicate your interest in an interview
- Provide contact information and best overall times to call

Sincerely,

Type your name