

# Cover Letter Guidelines

OFFICE OF CAREER, PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND RETENTION

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## **Career tip: Your letter should be comprised of three parts**

### **The Opening:**

Personalize your letter by addressing it to a person and a title. Be sure you've got the correct address. Cookie-cutter letters are a waste of time.

The opening paragraph is the headline. Its task is to compel the reader to continue reading. Hold it to no more than 40 words. Relate to the employer by demonstrating that you are interested and resourceful enough to have accumulated knowledge about the business as well as the opening for which you are applying.

### **The selling message:**

Refer to the enclosed résumé; summarize the reasons that the assets you bring to the table are aligned with the needs and interests of the potential employer. Deal with overall facts; leave the details to your résumé.

### **The Closing:**

Clearly state that you are seeking an opportunity for an interview to discuss in depth how your training and experience can be put to work for the employer. State a time, five to seven days out, when you will follow up by telephone to arrange for an interview at a time and place convenient for the employer.

Assure total quality and relevance of your job application

Have a third party (hopefully, someone with strong talents in composition, grammar, and proof-reading) to edit your sales letter and résumé. Errors scream lack of attention to details and ignorance.

Run a quality control check on the letter and résumé.

1. Is it logical and easily understood? Is the layout easy and quick to read?
2. Is it persuasive?
3. Is it free of errors?
4. Does it convey a message of quality and professionalism?
5. Is the message expressed in terms of benefits to the employer? Is it expressed in dynamic and action-oriented words and terms?
6. Does the message include a call for action?

## **Healthcare Cover Letter Tips**

<http://www.hospitaljobsonline.com/career-center/resumes-cover-letters/healthcare-industry-cover-letters.html>

### **Make It Memorable**

New healthcare graduates can make their cover letters stand out by personalizing their stories. If you decided to model your career after a healthcare professional who helped a family member, for example, tell that story rather than making the blander claim that you've always wanted to help people. "If your story is unique, it's no longer a cliché," Frank says.

### **Highlight Your Biggest Successes**

Your healthcare cover letter shouldn't just summarize your career or repeat the same information from your resume, according to Wendy Enelow, founder of the Career Masters Institute in Fresno, California. "[You want it to highlight the successes and achievements of your career that are most related to the types of positions for which you are applying](#),".

According to Frank, you should mention career-related "triples and home runs" in your cover letter.

### **Show Your Team Spirit**

If you have room for a few extra sentences in your cover letter, Lindsey suggests emphasizing your teamwork and communication skills. "In this day and age, teamwork and communication are vitally important in almost every healthcare position, from the lowest to the highest paid," she says.

Source: <https://www.monster.com/career-advice/article/healthcare-cover-letter-dos-donts>

# Jane Doe

12345 State Street  
Toledo, OH 12345

419-555-5555  
Jane.doe@email.com

## COVER LETTER WORKSHEET/FORMAT

Date

Name of Contact Person  
His/her Title  
Organization Name  
Street Address  
City, State, Zip

*Don't forget that  
your header should  
match your resume  
header!*

Dear Contact Person (Mr./Ms. and last name):

*[If a contact name is not listed, call the organization to ask for the appropriate contact. If you cannot locate a specific individual, address your letter to Members of the Search Committee or Human Resources Director]*

### • Opening Paragraph

Use this paragraph to get the employer's attention. Show your initiative, and what you have learned about the company that makes it attractive to you. Identify what position you are applying for (list specific job ID number and/or title posted) and how you learned about the position. If you have been referred to the position by someone in your network, include that information here.

### • Body of the Letter

This section of the letter is where you justify why you should be considered as a candidate. Relate your qualifications to the specific job requirements, using examples of your experiences and achievements to convey your knowledge and skills. Do not simply duplicate the information on your resume; rather highlight or add pertinent details of interest to the employer. Use wording similar to the job description and make a connection between your experiences and the duties/tasks of the position.

*Your goal is to convince the  
employer that you are a  
strong candidate qualified  
for an interview!*

### • The Closing

The final paragraph is used to express an interest in an opportunity to interview for the position or to meet to discuss your qualifications. Remember to thank the employer for reviewing your application.

Sincerely,

*Your Signature* [use black ink]

Your typed name

Enclosure: Resume *[If you are including a resume or another document with your cover letter]*

# Jane Doe

12345 State Street  
Toledo, OH 12345

419-555-5555  
Jane.doe@email.com

## A Strategy for Crafting an Effective Cover Letter

An effective cover letter will improve your chances for an interview and ultimately a job offer. Take some time to think about yourself – what makes you special, what you’ve accomplished, what abilities you most enjoy using, etc. Address your strongest attributes and don’t attempt to include everything about yourself. Thinking through the following questions will help you write a letter that connects your qualifications with an employer’s needs.

**Consider your USP** (Unique Selling Proposition – an advertising term used to market a product)

1. What are your unique qualities and strengths?

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2. What is it about this employer that attracts you and how would you be able to use your talents?

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**Think about your job and internship experiences.**

1. What skills and abilities have you used to accomplish your work?

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2. What accomplishments did you have? What are you most proud of?

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3. Identify examples where you exhibited qualities employers are looking for:

Communication skills\_\_\_\_\_

Strong work ethic\_\_\_\_\_

Teamwork\_\_\_\_\_

Initiative\_\_\_\_\_

Interpersonal skills\_\_\_\_\_

Problem-solving\_\_\_\_\_

Analytical skills\_\_\_\_\_

Flexibility/adaptability\_\_\_\_\_

Computer skills\_\_\_\_\_

**Review your coursework and identify what you have learned.**

1. What class assignments and group projects have resembled “real world” experiences?

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2. Identify and label the knowledge, skills and leadership qualities you have acquired through your coursework.

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**Think about your campus and community involvement.**

1. What campus and community positions have you held?

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2. What leadership and organizational skills have you used?

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## Job Application/Cover Letter

To create an effective job application letter, use good document design and use the reader-centered approach to information design: put the bottom line up front, show how you will help the organization achieve its goals, explain how your experience matches the job requirements, move from general to specific information to back up your claims. Please note that this sample is double-spaced for readability only. Professional documents are usually single-spaced.

224 Happy Drive #8  
Middletown, OH 12345

April 14, 2008  
Mr. Robert Robertson  
Director of Human Resources  
Data Systems Design  
600 DSD Lane  
Raleigh, NC 12345

### Introduction

Your introduction should discuss the following:

- Where you saw or heard about the position
- A brief background on the organization and its goals
- How your experience matches the position
- How you will help the organization achieve its goals
- Your objective: an interview

Dear Mr. Robertson:

While attending the computer science job fair at the University of Dayton on April 7, 2008, I met with Ms. Kathy Anderson from your networking and data transfer division. Ms. Anderson mentioned that Data Systems Design has an entry-level Application Programmer position open, and I would like to meet with you to discuss this opportunity further. For the past several years, I have followed the growth of Data Systems Design from a small privately owned company to a multinational corporation. Based on your aggressive growth in international markets, I believe my skills in programming and systems analysis can help your company succeed in these areas. Moreover, since you are planning to expand your operations in Asia, my fluency in Japanese and French will help you in this potentially lucrative market.

**Body Paragraph 1**

This paragraph should discuss the following:

- More detail on company goals/mission
- More detail supporting your claim that you can help them achieve goals/mission
- Specific example based on information in résumé
- How you will help the organization

After speaking with Ms. Anderson, I looked at your website. From your online information, it's clear you are looking to compete in Asia in the networking and data transfer markets.

Many companies in this part of the world are migrating information from legacy systems.

As a second semester senior at the University of Dayton, I will graduate in May with a B.S. degree in Computer Science with a focus on Networking and Data Transfer Management. I

believe my background closely matches the goals you outline on your website. In fact, in

Computer Science 390, I led a group of students helping to design a new online database for the Dayton YMCA. This database looked the same to users, but used a much more powerful search engine. This experience will help Data Systems Design because many of your potential customers have similar needs: seamless data transfer, transparent user interface, and high-level security.

**Body Paragraph 2**

This paragraph should discuss the following:

- More detail on position requirements
- More detail supporting your claim that your experience fulfills these requirements
- Specific example based on information in résumé
- How you will help the organization

Your website states that entry-level Application Programmers must have experience using VSAM. In addition, you state that applicants should have some real-world experience beyond the classroom. I have experience with VSAM, and I have real-world experience. During my internship with Dominick's Food Stores, I used VSAM to develop a unique solution for accessing data in the company's capital expenditure database. My effort helped the company to monitor and report capital expenses in a timelier and accurate manner. Additionally, my course work has included assignments where I worked with outside companies on real-world programming projects. Through my experiences, I have become very familiar in implementing all phases of the systems development process. My background will help Data Systems Design because you will not have to train me on your VSAM applications and development procedures.



### **Closing Paragraph**

This paragraph should do the following:

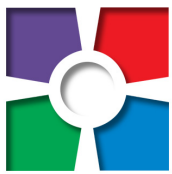
- Repeat your main objective: an interview
- Provide contact information
- Close the letter in a professional manner
- Provide signature block
- Provide enclosure information

Data Systems Design is a growing company with the potential to expand even further in Asian markets, and I would like to speak with you further about how my experience can help you increase your operations in countries such as Japan. I will be contacting your office next week, but if you have any questions, please call me at (xxx) xxx-xxxx or email me at xxx@xxx.xxx. I look forward to hearing from you soon. Thank you for reviewing my letter and my enclosed résumé.

Sincerely,

Xxxx Xxxxxxx

Enclosure (Résumé)



# Why a Cover Letter?

*Cover letters are the first opportunity to selling yourself as the product.*

## Why the fuss?

Hands down: Cover letters are an integral part of your online or in person résumé.

But why a cover letter if you already have a résumé? Simply put: The cover letter explains why you believe you are a good fit for the position, while the résumé proves how you are qualified for the position through your skills and experience.

Well-written cover letters are your first opportunity to sell yourself, create an impression, and separate yourself from the competition. They introduce you and your résumé, and help determine whether you make it to the interview stage. Some employers won't even read a résumé without a cover letter.

## Introduction, overview, and summary.

Your cover letter puts your skills into context. It is the part of your résumé where you have the employer's full attention to quickly explain how all those skills and accomplishments neatly organized in your résumé will make you the best fit of all candidates for the company.

The tone should be businesslike, yet engaging and enthusiastic. Get to the point right after the salutation: State why you are writing, the position you're interested in, and what makes you the best candidate. Include how you learned of the position, add your degree and school, and, as appropriate, your current position and relevant extracurricular activities. Close with a "Thank you." and a request for an interview.

Keep it professional: Be brief, pertinent, neat, and accurate. You only have about three or four short paragraphs on one page to make your case.

## Looks count on paper.

Cover letters should be inviting to the eye. Use an easy-to-read typeface, such as Helvetica, Arial, or Times, in 10-point or 12-point size. Avoid using all boldface, all italics, or all capital letters. Align type flush left and ragged right for easiest reading. Use black ink on high-grade white or ivory letterhead stationery.

Place your full address and contact info at the top left, followed by a line space, the date, another full line space, the employer's name, company, and full address, another line space, and salutation. Follow that with another line space and then the body of your letter. Leave a line space between paragraphs, without any indentation. Then one more line space, and conclude your letter with "Sincerely," on a line of its own, leaving sufficient space below for your penned full signature, just above your typed full name.

Whenever possible, address your letter to a specific person, not "To Whom It May Concern". If addressing "Robert Smith", use "Dear Mr. Smith:" or "Dear Sir:" with a colon as a salutation; not "Dear Robert,;" not "Hi, Bob!"

If you can't identify the right person, then say "Human Resources Director" or "Director/Manager of [specific department]", or "Dear Recruiter".

## Finessing the details.

Research the company so each cover letter is company-specific. Use straightforward language, active not passive words, good grammar, and accurate spelling. No slang, texting abbreviations, or other symbols.

Read your letter through for clarity. Remember, you're selling "you" and you don't have more than a few moments of an employer's time to do that, so don't use generic language such as "I like to work with people."

Hone your sentences carefully so each word counts. You need to keep the prospective employer's attention.

Finally, place your finished cover letter carefully on top of your résumé. Mail them together unfolded in a high-quality 9 x 12" white envelope, instead of the standard matching #10, for greater impact.

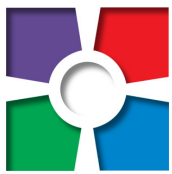


## i n a nutshell:

Cover letters are sales letters, so make sure your message and medium are both clear and clean:

- **Use plain quality stationery**
- **Personalize your letter**
- **Address the specific job and give qualification specifics**
- **Focus on what you can offer**
- **Be direct, relevant, and brief**
- **Don't rehash your résumé; highlight major points**
- **Proof, proof, proof for typos and accuracy; and don't lie**
- **Include a "Thank you," request an interview, then follow up**

Remember, your cover letter is the key to your interview. It must be perfect!



# Transferable Skills: Invisible Assets

*You may have more to offer an employer than you realize.*

## But, wait! There's more!

As a student or recent graduate, how do you capitalize on your previous, even if limited, work experience? How do you enhance your candidacy when crafting your cover letter and résumé? How do you translate summers of waiting tables, an art internship, or volunteer time assisting Habitat for Humanity into viable selling points that are relevant to a current job opportunity, even if unrelated?

Answer: Focus on your transferable skills.

Basically, transferable skills are part of your life experience; versatile skills and qualities learned and developed over time that can be applied to many situations. They are acquired through upbringing, education, networking, work, mentoring, training, social interaction, and other activities. Honed through self-awareness and action, transferable skills help you navigate through life and are essential to career success.

## A competitive advantage.

For employers, candidates with transferable skills are more prepared to solve problems, generate ideas, and meet customer needs. These job seekers can “think on their feet” in various roles and situations: They may be as adept at handling customer issues as they are at fundraising.

Transferable skills are diverse and include people, data, and technical skills:

**Communication skills.** Using verbal and writing skills, body language, tone of voice to communicate ideas and thoughts clearly, effectively, persuasively.

**Interpersonal skills.** Being able to listen, relate, understand, cooperate, manage, guide, and “play well with others.”

**Leadership skills.** The ability to inspire, influence, motivate; assess situations, make decisions; take risks and determine goals; achieve results through resourcefulness, creativity, and teamwork.

**Analytical skills.** How you analyze data; research, compile, and interpret information; handle numbers, apply logic, and determine patterns.

**Organizational skills.** Includes time management; the ability to prioritize, disseminate and record data, generate accurate reports, manage resources.

**Technical skills.** The application of practical know-how and hands-on proficiency with specific equipment and machinery, software and hardware, techniques and regimens.

**Personal qualities.** Having integrity, resilience, self-awareness, self-discipline and control; being punctual, reliable, patient, responsible, fair, creative, positive, and so on.

## Applying what you learned

First, dissect previous experiences and jobs into core skills. Identify what worked—or didn't. Then focus on the value you now bring to a new job. Point out transferable skills that are relevant to the job description in your cover letter and résumé. Include them in your elevator speech (see: Elevator Speech: Job Search Infomercial), and when networking and interviewing to demonstrate your assets and versatility:

- Waiting tables in a fast-paced, high-pressured setting enabled you to develop customer skills and anticipate diner needs. In retail sales, you can then quickly ascertain desires and skillfully offer solutions that satisfy a customer's demands, as well as effectively resolve complaints.
- Your museum internship required organizational skills for handling art and scheduling openings, qualities you bring to an assistant event planner position where networking and time management are crucial.
- Building new homes for disaster relief provided technical know how of tools, construction principles, and building codes applicable to a home inspector job.

You may be new to a job and its tasks, but these other traits and qualities will help you bridge the gap.



## i n a nutshell:

Transferable skills enable you to:

- **Be a more desirable candidate**
- **Be more confident, disciplined and resourceful in many areas**
- **Qualify for more opportunities**
- **Transition and adapt more quickly to new situations**
- **Establish and maintain meaningful relationships**
- **Interact well with others to achieve successful results**
- **Be a more well-rounded, independent individual**

Make yourself more marketable:  
Focus on how your transferable skills will add value and generate positive results for your employer.