



## Don't skip the cover letter. Employers do read it.

Cover letters use the following paragraphs to communicate with an employer:

**Introductory paragraph** - tells what position you are applying for and how you found out about it.

**Middle paragraph(s)** - describes your past experience and personal traits as they relate to the position and demonstrates accomplishments and results of your work.

**Concluding paragraph** - expresses interest in an interview, states the best way to reach you and thanks the employer for their time.

## Cover Letter FAQs

### How long should my cover letter be?

Cover letters are typically 3-4 paragraphs long and no longer than one page.

### Who do I address it to?

If you can find the name of the manager or supervisor, use it. Otherwise you can use, "Dear Hiring Manager" or something similar. Be sure to follow the instructions on the job posting to know what details to include and how to submit it.

### Does anyone even read cover letters?

The short answer is yes. Although some employers may focus more on the resume to screen candidates, they will take the time to read your cover letter if you are being interviewed. Employers appreciate seeing an example of your written communication skills and getting a better sense of who you are. In this way, a cover letter can be a bridge from your resume to the interview.

### Can I use the same basic cover letter for every job application?

It's best to modify your cover letters to match the job requirements. You can use the same examples of your skills as long as they relate to the position. However, try to highlight something specific about yourself that helps you stand out from other applicants.

### With formatting, how can I make my cover letter stand out without overdoing it?

You can use bullets in the middle section of the cover letter to highlight examples from your previous experience that demonstrate your skills, outcomes and accomplishments.



## Cover Letter Template

### **YOUR NAME**

Address, City, State, Zip Code, phone, email, (LinkedIn)

**(NOTE: Use the same heading that is on your resume)**

Month, Day, Year

Name, Title [or ATTN: Human Resources]

Company or Organization

Address

City, State, Zip Code

### **RE: Job title and a job code or number, if relevant**

Dear [Mr. or Ms. Last Name] or [Dear Hiring Manager],

Introductory Paragraph: State the specific position for which you are applying and how you learned about the job opening.

Middle Paragraph(s): Relate your work/volunteer/education background to the position. Specify or elaborate on information in your resume by describing specific outcomes of your skills in action. Make a connection between yourself and the employer by expressing why you are interested in the position or organization.

Concluding Paragraph: Reinforce how your skills and personal attributes can benefit the company or organization and indicate your interest in an interview. State the best way to reach you and thank the employer for their time.

Sincerely,

Your name

**Note: Depending on how you are asked to submit your cover letter, you may only need to copy and paste the three paragraphs into an email or a section of an online application.**



## Writing exercises to improve the middle paragraph of a cover letter

The middle paragraph is where you describe to the prospective employer how you are qualified to do the job. Use the following writing exercises to describe your past experience and personal traits as they relate to the position and demonstrates accomplishments and results of your work.

**Read the job description and list three of the top skills required:**

1. ....
2. ....
3. ....

**For each of the skills above, write 1-2 sentences describing when you've used those skills in past jobs:**

1. ....  
.....  
.....
2. ....  
.....  
.....  
.....
3. ....  
.....  
.....

**Write 1-2 sentences about a special accomplishment or a moment when you were proud about your work:**

- .....  
.....  
.....



## Examples of middle paragraphs from cover letters

1

At the Nursing Home, I was promoted to Maintenance Director from Maintenance Assistant in less than a year. My job required flexibility and patience as well as problem-solving and strong customer service skills. For example, I might start my day responding to an emergency call about a leaking toilet, then participate in a capital projects meeting with management, and later turn over an apartment for a new resident.

Additionally, as part of my job, I supervised maintenance and housekeeping staff, managed inventory and budgets and produced reports. I also identified additional vendors to save the organization money. What I like most about this work is meeting challenges and resolving problems to make a difference in residents' and clients' lives.

2

When I was in Ethiopia, I took care of my grandmother. She needed assistance with bathing, cooking and cleaning. I enjoyed spending time with her and listening to her stories about family. During this time, I was also talking with my uncle about eating better and getting exercise to manage his diabetes. After making these changes, his blood sugar level dropped from 200 to between 90-120 before meals.

These experiences helping my family have made me interested in a career in healthcare. My current goal is to work as a Personal Care Attendant while finishing my degree at Bunker Hill Community College. One day I plan to become a nurse.

3

Much of my professional experience has been as an educator. This past year, I decided to make a career shift from the classroom to a more administrative role because I discovered I had a passion for the operational side of education.

Based on this job description, I know you are looking for someone with strong communication skills and experience managing both the logistical details and research-centered duties required by The Literacy Initiative. I was able to exercise these skills in my past jobs, including maintaining consistent communication between school personnel and parents, drafting and editing confidential reports, as well as tracking and analyzing data to formulate future academic goals.



### Note

These three paragraphs correspond to the summaries on page 5 of the resume packet.