

Creating a Cover Letter – Before you Send

Cover letters aren't very easy to write, either. However, they are a chance for you to highlight some of the best things on your resume and explain your accomplishments further. Even though they aren't always "required", a cover letter should accompany EVERY single resume you send out. This way, the employer gets to know you a little better and you stand out from the crowd a little more – win/win, right? So here are some tips on writing your cover letter.

Remember, a cover letter should accompany EVERY resume you send.

Addressing Your Cover Letter – Who do I Send it to?

1. Like a resume, **a cover letter is tailored to each position.** Do NOT use one cover letter for all employers.

Why?

Employers tell us that general letters show a lack of interest on your part, so they don't take them seriously.

2. Address the letter to a specific person. **Do not use** "to whom it may concern" as your salutation.

Why?

You may need to call the business or organization and ask to whom the letter should be addressed. If you're responding to a "blind ad" – one where only a mailing address is listed – and you've addressed your letter to the hiring manager or committee correctly, it shows you've done your research. This is impressive to potential employers.

Getting Ready to Apply – Making Sure you Stand out

1. **Proofread your letter!** Get someone else to look at it if you know you have trouble revising your own work.

Why?

Your cover letter shows your prospective employer a great deal about your communication skills, so make a good impression. Also, employers tell us that poor grammar and misspelled words indicate a poor work ethic on the writer's part. A career counselor can help you proofread and revise your cover letter.

2. **Be brief.** A cover letter should not go on for pages. In fact, one page is the general rule.

Why?

Hiring committees often have to look at mountains of resumes and cover letters each day – on top of their normal job duties. They look at resumes and cover letters for only 10-30 seconds before deciding whether or not yours is worth the extra time. Be brief, concise, and still showcase all the skills you have and remember to tell them *why those skills are good for their company*. It shows that you know what the company is about and that you can connect skills to job duties.