

Cover Letter Writing

The resume never travels alone. Each time you submit your resume to an employer you should enclose a cover letter which explains why you are submitting the resume. Keep in mind that cover letters are not generic and should be written specifically for each job you apply for. It is the key to creating interest in your candidacy.

The cover letter is your "sales pitch." It should summarize your qualifications and highlight your most appropriate skills or background in relation to a particular position without simply reiterating the information on your resume. There are two types of cover letters:

1. **Application Letter** - This letter is written when you know of a specific opening and want to apply for the position. Its purpose is to get your enclosed resume read and generate an interview. ***Your strategy is to demonstrate that your qualifications fit the requirements of the position.*** Study the position description carefully and link each of the described job dimensions with your skills and experience. Structure your application letter with three sections:

The opening (1 paragraph): Tell why you are writing, the name of the position or field, how you heard about the opening (company website, newspaper ad, referral, etc.), and why you are interested in this particular company, location, or type of work. This paragraph should also include a statement emphasizing your enthusiasm and fit for the position.

The body (usually 1 or 2 paragraphs): Sell yourself. Outline your strongest qualifications that match the position requirements. Provide evidence of your related experience and accomplishments by providing specific examples. Make referrals to your enclosed resume. Convince the employer that you have the personal qualities and motivation to perform well. Indicate any knowledge you may have of the organization that demonstrates you have done research and are familiar with their operation.

The closing (1 paragraph): Close by showing interest in further discussing your qualifications (a.k.a., an interview), providing your phone number and e-mail address, and showing appreciation for being considered.

2. **Inquiry Letter** - This letter is written when you are asking an employer for information about possible job or internship openings. Its purpose is also to get your resume read and generate interviews. Structure this letter similarly to the application letter, but instead of using position information, focus on broader occupational and/or organizational dimensions to show how your qualifications match the work environment.

Cover Letter Tips

- Print on good quality resume paper.** Use the same type of paper that your resume is printed on.
- Address to a specific name and title.** If you are uncertain whom to address, try finding it online, look at reference materials in the Career Services Resource Center, or check a company database, like CareerSearch or eRecruiting. You can also call the organization's human resources department to ask for information.
- Writing style should be direct, powerful and error free.** Edit to eliminate extraneous words and to check grammar, spelling and punctuation. In addition to stating your purpose, the letter tells the reader how well you communicate.
- The cover letter should be no more than one page.** Keep the letter concise and onto one page only.
- Use appropriate language.** Repeat terms that the employer uses. Avoid jargon and the passive voice. Use action verbs and the active voice. Do not try to be cute or too aggressive.
- Be employer focused.** Tell the employer what you have to offer and how your qualifications match the job description, not what you hope to gain from them or the position.
- Always be positive** by stressing your base accomplishments and skills as well as your future value.
- Be sure to keep copies of all correspondence.** It is possible that you will need to refer to it in the future.

SAMPLE COVER LETTER

1234 West 45 St.
Rochester, NY 32165
April 1, 2010

Dr. John Robertson
Principal
Horseheads High School
987 South St.
Horseheads, NY 12345

Dear Dr. Robertson:

I am writing to express my interest in the recently posted position of High School Social Studies Teacher that I found on the Horseheads Central School District website. I will graduate in May of this year from Ithaca College with a Bachelor of Arts in Social Studies Education and be certified to teach in grades seven through twelve. My education, experience, and passion for teaching would make me an excellent team member in the Horseheads Central School District.

As you can see in the enclosed resume, my classroom experiences include working with students of various abilities from different grade levels and academic settings. During student teaching at Thompson Middle School, I incorporated read-alouds, games, and group work, along with some one-on-one instruction, to keep everyone engaged. This experience helped further develop my classroom management skills. Also, for the last two years I have volunteered as a tutor for the Ithaca Youth Bureau's after school program, working with groups and individuals with varying learning styles and abilities. Depending on the needs of each student, I use a mixture of study methods including note cards, practice quizzes, homework review, and discussion. In every teaching setting, I utilize a holistic student-centered approach and pride myself on adapting instruction methods according to students' individual needs.

I would appreciate the opportunity to discuss how my education and experience are a good match for this position. I can be reached at (555) 555-5555 or randerson@ithaca.edu. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Richard Anderson

Enclosures

Career Services
101 Muller Center
(607) 274-3365
careers@ithaca.edu
www.ithaca.edu/careers

Find Career Services on:

