



# COVER LETTER GUIDELINES

## What is a Cover Letter?

A cover letter introduces you and your resume to an employer. With every resume that you submit, it is imperative that you send a tailored cover letter paper clipped or attached to it.

A cover letter is also important because it provides a sample of your written communication skills. Showing you can write well will demonstrate your intelligence and help to establish your credibility. Always write cover letters with care, because, like resumes, cover letters create an image of who you are as a professional.

You should plan to write a new cover letter for every position you apply for, because cover letters should be tailored to the needs of your readers. Always bear in mind that the content of your cover letter should change, although you can keep a generalized draft to work from each time you create one.

Your cover letter should always be addressed to a specific person, by their name. This will immediately grab the reader's attention and show that you have done your research.

## What Should a Cover Letter Include?

The *opening paragraph* should state **why you are writing** and why you are interested in the organization. If you are writing a letter of application, you should name the specific position for which you are applying. Also, tell the employer how you became aware of the vacancy. If a former employer or someone else referred you to the employer, this is the best place to drop that person's name and mention that he or she suggested you write. A letter of inquiry should provide evidence of your career-mindedness; it helps to refer to specific job functions, if not titles, when trying to determine if a vacancy exists.

The *second paragraph* is where you draw attention to your resume and highlight specific skills relevant to the potential employer. This paragraph is devoted to explaining **how you are qualified**. Cite achievements and qualifications related to the position desired. If you have qualifications that are not noted on your resume, this is your opportunity to discuss them.

The *third paragraph* states **why you are right for this job**. Use this paragraph to demonstrate your knowledge of the employer and their goals. Tell them why you should be considered for the position you are applying for. A little bit of homework on the company or the industry can really pay off by showing the employer that you are serious about your application, and informed about the type of work and experience that it requires.

The *closing paragraph* states **what you will do next** (such as calling to arrange an appointment at the employer's convenience) or what you would like the recipient of the letter to do next. Request action. Ask for an interview. Inform the employer when you will make contact with them again if appropriate. Either here, or in your closing, thank the employer for their time. Restate your phone number and e-mail address in case this becomes separated from your resume.

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# SAMPLE COVER LETTER

August 9, 20??

9781 College  
Springfield, IL 62701

Ms. Lauren Liu  
Managing Editor  
Amazon.com  
P.O. Box 6898  
Seattle, Washington 98961

Dear Ms. Liu,

While researching information on Amazon.com, I focused on an opening in the editorial department as a category writer. I would like to be considered for this position at your company's headquarters in Seattle. This May, I will graduate from the University of Illinois Springfield with a degree in journalism in the magazine sequence, and I would like to use the knowledge, skills and experience that I have gained to pioneer Internet businesses like yours.

I have had extensive experience in feature writing at newspapers and magazines, along with writing creatively in the corporate world. However, my true interest lies in new media and how to merge innovative writing with cutting-edge technology. For the past year, I have been an on-line editor for the Hate Report, a report on the state of inequality at the University of Illinois Springfield. In addition to my online experience, I have worked as a reporter for the health, science and environment beat for the *Springfield Illinoisan* and as a features editor for *Vox* magazine. I have also had experience as a copyeditor for *Vox* and the *Hate Report*. I am confident, because of these experiences, that I could bring creativity, grace-under-pressure, and style to the job.

I understand that Amazon.com has been on the forefront of technology since its beginning in 1995. With my flair for the creative and my ability to reach a rainbow of readers, I believe that I am well suited to help your company expand well into the millennium. Your mission to transform Internet buying into the fastest, easiest, and most enjoyable experience possible is one that I could aid substantially with not only my writing experience, but also my dream for the same.

More importantly, though, I know a letter and resume can only tell you so much about my motivations and qualifications. I would like to discuss my background with you in person and would be willing to travel to Seattle at my own expense to do so. I will call you at the end of next week to discuss whether such a meeting would be possible and to confirm that you have received my resume and writing samples. Please feel free to contact me at harperharper.com or (123) 456-7890.

Sincerely,

*Your Signature Here*

Your Name Typed

Enclosure(s) *(This indicates that your resume and/or additional materials are enclosed.)*

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