

# How to Write a Stand-Out Cover Letter

You're psyched! You've come across a job opportunity that appears to be a perfect fit and in a competitive job market—you want to act quickly. Take a pause. It's critical to spend the time needed to create a well-written, effective, and error-free cover letter and résumé.

Here are a few tips for generating a stand-out cover letter, which must best articulate who you are, what you bring to the table, and why you are the best candidate for the job.



## TIP:

Research! Ensure you have a solid handle on the company and position. It is imperative to know what the company does overall, as well as its mission, consumers, successes, and challenges. And be thorough in your review of the position description.



### Greeting

Use a contact name if at all possible. If you don't have a contact name, begin with "Dear Hiring Manager" or "Dear Hiring Team." Avoid "To Whom It May Concern."

### The Opening Paragraph

Use an enthusiastic tone. Be sure to reference the specific position you are seeking and a detailed reason why you are a good candidate for the job.

Be strategic and don't simply restate your résumé.

### Body of the Letter

Review the skills, knowledge, education, experience, and personal qualities necessary for success and assemble a list of assets you bring that best align with the requirements of the position.

Assets can include relevant skills, course work, knowledge, experience, personal qualities, honors, awards, motivations, and interests.

For each asset, develop a sentence referencing how this strength can best aid your ability to perform specific responsibilities.

Aim to compile a list of six reasons why the employer should hire you.

Use verbs such as created, increased, calculated, analyzed, initiated, and reorganized to dynamically describe your background.

Tailor your letter to the specific job requirements of the position.

Shoot for three paragraphs or about 300 words.

### The Close

The closing paragraph of your cover letter must be one of the soundest elements, as it's the last impression you leave in the reader's mind. Summarize your strengths and how and why you are a good fit for the job.

Be a bit forward about the next step. If you want an interview, write that you look forward to "talking in person about ..." Be confident, but be courteous.

Thank the reader for their consideration and close with a professional salutation such as "Best Regards" or "Sincerely."

Finally, proofread, run through spell check, and ask a friend or two to review your letter. A second set of eyes can often pick up errors you missed.

Once you've covered all your bases, *you* can confidently move forward with the application process. And that's the name of the game!