



DO I REALLY NEED A COVER LETTER?

Ideally, every resume should be accompanied by a cover letter.

The cover letter is a powerful tool that adds a personal touch to your candidature. It introduces you to a prospective employer and communicates your knowledge and enthusiasm for the position and the organization. As well, it demonstrates how your education and experience qualify you for the position.

The quality of your cover letter will positively influence the employer's first impression of you and motivate him or her to read your resume. Therefore, it needs to be tailored to the position for which you are applying for and should highlight work experiences (paid and volunteer) and achievements that are relevant to the position. The cover letter can contain information not found in your resume.

The cover letter highlights work experiences relevant to the specific position, while the resume is a comprehensive description of work experiences. In some situations, the cover letter can also serve as a good example of your writing abilities.

THE FIRST STEP IN WRITING A COVER LETTER

RESEARCH, RESEARCH, RESEARCH

The first step to writing a cover letter is researching information on the position and the company. To do this you can:

- ☞ Speak to employees of the company
- ☞ Speak to professionals in the specific field of work
- ☞ Research information on this type of position (tasks, education required, etc.) by using career exploration websites such as Career Cruising and National Occupational classification
- ☞ Explore the company's website (mission, values, organizational chart, etc.)
- ☞ Review the job description

This exercise will help you gain knowledge of the requirements and personality traits sought by the employer as well as help you identify the work experiences and achievements that you should highlight in your cover letter resume.

THE COVER LETTER SHOULD MEET THE FOLLOWING CRITERIA

- ✓ Be one page, attractive, concise and easy to read
- ✓ Contain no presentation or grammatical errors
- ✓ Contain no abbreviations or acronyms unfamiliar to the employer
- ✓ Be personalized (date, name of the company and person in charge of the recruitment process, as well as signed)
- ✓ Include contact information (phone and email)
- ✓ Include the competition number (especially if it is mentioned in the job description)
- ✓ Contain 3 to 4 paragraphs (opening paragraph, body of your letter, closing paragraph)
- ✓ Highlight your experience relevant to the position, as well as personal qualities that can be an asset to the company
- ✓ Be written in complete sentences, using action verbs to describe your experience
- ✓ Indicate your willingness to attend an interview
- ✓ Be consistent with your resume (font type, margins, paper, etc.)

THE DIFFERENT COMPONENTS OF THE COVER LETTER

1. The date

2. Recipient's and company contact information

As much as possible, try to find the name of the person who is responsible of the recruitment process, as well as his or her title. This information can usually be found on the job description. If not, a phone call or email to the company's receptionist or Human Resource department can help you get this information. By getting this information, you will demonstrate to the employer that you are a serious and prepared candidate who is sincerely interested in the position available. As well, it is important to write the name of the organisation as well as its address.

3. Reference or subject line

This element of your cover letter helps the recipient identify the purpose of your letter. As well, this is where you would include the competition number.

4. Salutation

Dear Mr. Smith or Mrs. Tremblay.

5. Opening paragraph

It is in this paragraph that you will state the purpose of the cover letter, how you learned about that position that is available and why you are interest in the position or the possibility of working for this employer.

If you have been referred by a contact person (employee or professional known by the employer) you may want to add this information in your opening paragraph. This can positively influence the employer's first impression of you. Employers will more readily have a good first impression of candidates referred by someone they know and respect

6. **Body paragraph**

The body of the cover letter should consist of one or two paragraphs and should answer the question: Why are you a good candidate for this position?

It's in this section that you will emphasize the specific knowledge and skills that make you a strong candidate for the job. Do not repeat word for word the information that can be found in your resume, instead select the most relevant information, summarize it and provide examples to illustrate that you have the required skills. "My experience as a camp counselor has helped me strengthen my leadership and communication skills".

This section of the cover letter should also include two or three personal qualities that are related to the job and make you a strong candidate. As much as possible, offer specific examples of where these qualities have been demonstrated.

The job description and the company's website are excellent tools that can help you identify the relevant work experience, knowledge areas as well as personal qualities that you may want to highlight and describe in your cover letter

7. **Closing paragraph**

The purpose of this paragraph is to let the employer know that you are available and interested in having an interview to further discuss your experience, skills and knowledge relevant to the position. In this paragraph, you can also reiterate your interest in working in this specific job or for this organization.

8. **Closing statement**

End your letter with a courteous statement such as "Sincerely", "Best regards" or "Yours truly". As well, it is important to sign your letter above your typewritten name and phone number.

9. **Enclosure(s)**

Indicate any enclosures by writing "Encl." and list of documents that you have sent with your cover letter for the employer to consider. Do not forget that the employer has a limited time to look at your candidacy; therefore, do not include documents that are not requested by the employer. Instead, keep those documents to make a good impression during your interview.

SENDING YOUR LETTER

Most employers will either ask that you send your resume and cover letter either by mail or electronically. If you are faxing your documents, make sure to include a fax cover sheet that clearly identifies the person to whom you are sending these documents, as well as your personal information. This way, the employer will be able to contact you, should they have problems with receiving your documents (i.e. fax machine runs out of ink).

When sending your application via email to the employer, do not “Cut and Paste” your cover letter into the body text of the email message. Instead you should attach your resume and cover letter to your email as one document and write a brief email message that will indicate to the employer the purpose of your email, your interest for the position, as well as indicate which documents he or she should find attaches.

This email should also contain no presentation or grammatical errors

Email example

Subject Heading: Second Language Teaching Position

Dear Mr. Bibeau,

You will find attached in a PDF format my cover letter and resume for the Second Language Teaching Position. This work opportunity corresponds to my professional interests, experience and career objectives. I am looking forward to discussing how I might be an asset to your school.

Should you require any additional information regarding my candidacy, please feel free to contact me at (819) 756-3847.

Best regards,

Jerry Morin

COVER LETTER EXAMPLES

November 29, 2011

Frederic Girard
Hiring Manager
Ideal Company
100 Maine Avenue
Sherbrooke, Quebec

Subject: Entry level accountant position

Dear Mr. Girard,

I am writing to apply for the entry level accounting position posted on Ideal Company's website. After reading about the job description, I was thrilled to discover that all the requirements you have indicated precisely meet my academic achievements and work experience.

As my resume demonstrates, I have been volunteering for the last two years to the income tax clinic for Bishop's students. This experience has certainly increased my knowledge of the different rules and regulations regarding income taxes, as well as my ability to search and understand this information. I also have knowledge and basic experience doing simple business accounting tasks. As an assistant manager for Yellow shoe stores, I had the responsibility of balancing the cash after each shift, as well as answering employee's questions regarding deductions on their pay slip. These work experiences, as well as the different courses taken in accounting, have helped enhance my ability to be attentive to details and to work well under the pressure of tight deadlines.

I would appreciate an opportunity to further discuss my experience and qualifications for this entry level accounting position, as well as ways I might contribute to the success of the company. Thanking you in advance for your time and consideration,

Sincerely,

Joannie Desmarais
(819) 832 1533

May 09, 2010

Audrey Rameau
Human Resource Manager
Great School board
100 Student Street
Sherbrooke, Quebec

Subject: Elementary teacher position (Competition number: 23-867-0c)

Dear Mrs. Rameau,

It is with great interest that I am enclosing my resume for consideration as a kindergarten teacher for the position posted on the school board website. Given my exemplary academic achievements in elementary education, recent teacher certification and sincere interest in teaching at this level, I believe I'm an excellent fit for this position.

My two distinct internships have given me the opportunity to enhance my teaching skills, my knowledge of the needs of special students, as well as my ability to manage a class of 20 to 25 students. Furthermore, my work experiences as a camp leader has definitely helped me acquire the ability to quickly adjust to unforeseen situations and adapt existing material to the unique developmental stage of each child. I enjoy being a team player and my strong interpersonal skills have helped me develop and maintain positive relationships with students, parents and faculty.

It is my goal to combine my experience and education with my ability to be a compassionate, enthusiastic and innovative teacher who will make a positive contribution to your school district. I would welcome an interview and hope to hear from you at your earliest convenience.

Sincerely,

Mathieu Pelletier
(819) 884-2276

Encl. Resume and reference letter