

# Cover Letter Writing Workshop

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*presented by Bea Hait, CPRW, NCRW*

*A cover letter is personal introduction of you for a specific opportunity and should always accompany a résumé to highlight the skills and competencies you possess that relate directly to that specific position.*

**In a cover letter you should:** Tell why are you interested in the position ... Tell how you are qualified for that specific position ... Ask for an interview

**You can (if it enhances your candidacy):** Mention how you learned of this position ... Give a reason for the job search ... Note availability for relocation ... Explain employment gaps

## Writing tips

- Should a cover letter be limited to one page? Most often yes. Usually 3-4 paragraphs: (1) why you are writing, (2 and 3) your qualifications and (4) interest in the position, thank you and next steps.
- Follow directions in the job posting for submitting the résumé and cover letter.
- If online submission is preferred, also try to find out the name of the decision maker and mail – or email – or hand deliver a hard copy to that individual, stating you already submitted as instructed but wanted to follow up by bringing your candidacy to this hiring authority's attention.
- If salary info is requested: Comply with the request but do so in a broad manner. State a range ... state your expectation that the salary offered would be within industry norms ... state your confidence that when the time came to discuss a compensation package an agreement would be reached.

## Layout of the letter

- Use proper business letter writing conventions. Balance professionalism with a more conversational, friendly tone in the body of the letter.
- Use the same contact header (font style, size and formatting) as on the résumé.
- Write in first person curtailing the use of "I" or "my" and use varied sentence lengths.
- Options: short paragraphs ... bulleted list of accomplishments ... 2-column comparison of job requirements and your experience ... testimonial(s).
- When you think you've completed your cover letter, print it, put it aside, and read it the next day with "fresh eyes." Have a second set of eyes proof the document.

## Using the 5-step plan to write a cover letter

- Make a comment about the state of the targeted employer or the industry regarding challenges or issues.
- Tie the solution to you.
- Relate a similar challenge you faced in the past and your part in resolving that challenge (C-A-R: Challenge, Action, Result).
- Prove that the solution was beneficial to your employer (testimonials).
- Emphasize your passion for the position and your value to the targeted employer.

## Presenting your cover letter and résumé

- Save the document in MS Word (.doc file rather than .docx file) for uploading.
- Use your first and last name in the document title along with the company name of the potential employer.
- Ideally print on a laser printer on the same quality paper as the résumé.
- If submitting online where you are directed to "paste or insert cover letter here" – convert the MS Word file to ASCII (plain text)
- If submitting the résumé and cover letter by email, use an abbreviated form of the cover letter in the body of the email and put the job title (or job code) and your name in the subject line.

Other types of cover letters:

**Broadcast letters**

**Networking letters**

**Letters to recruiters**

### **Thank You letters**

Thank you letters after an interview demonstrate you **listened** to the interview, you **heard** their issues, **you have the answers**, and you are excited about this opportunity.

Link your skills to **solving specific workplace problems** you learned about in the interview.

**Offer new information:** "We didn't talk about the fact that I ...."

Address a perceived initial **objection** for your hire.

**Strengthen points** raised in the interview.

### **RESOURCES:**

*Résumé Magic* by Susan Britton Whitcomb

*Cover Letter Magic* by Wendy Enelow and Louise Kursmark

*Interview Magic* by Susan Britton Whitcomb

*Job Search Magic* by Susan Britton Whitcomb

*Expert Résumés* series by Wendy Enelow and Louise Kursmark

*for Career Changers*

*for Computer and Web Jobs*

*for Engineers*

*for Health Care Careers*

*for Teachers and Educators*

*for Recent Graduates*

*for Manufacturing Careers*

*College Grad Résumés to Land \$75,000+ Jobs* by Wendy Enelow and Louise Kursmark

For Career Exploration / Industry Keyword Research

O\*Net Online [www.onetonline.org](http://www.onetonline.org)

Occupational Information Network

US Dept. of Labor/Employment and Training Administration

Occupational Outlook Handbook [www.bls.gov/oco/](http://www.bls.gov/oco/)

Bureau of Labor Statistics

For salary research (take note of job responsibilities vs. titles alone)

[www.salary.com](http://www.salary.com)

[www.payscale.com](http://www.payscale.com)

Cost of living factors: CNN Money Calculator

[cgi.money.com/tools](http://cgi.money.com/tools)