



Cover Letter Cheat Sheet

A great resume will secure you a spot in the “maybe” pile, but a fantastic cover letter will give you the opportunity to stand out amongst the competition. Here is your first step to crafting the perfect cover letter.

Step 1: The Salutation

This will be the first thing a prospective interviewer will see, so get this part right.

- **Dear ?** – Find an actual person to address your letter to. If you can't find the information online, call the company and politely ask for the appropriate contact. Avoid making your cover letter's first impression “Dear Sir/Madam” or “To Whom It May Concern” at all costs.
- **Skip the formality** - If you absolutely can't find the right person, just dispense with the formalities and jump right into your intro.

Step 2: The Hook

If you can get your reader past this section, you're in good shape, so make this part count.

- **Don't be obvious** – While you absolutely want to be clear about why you're the best fit for the position you're applying for, tired lines like, “I'm submitting my resume for consideration for XYZ position,” is tired and outdated. Say why you're applying, but put it in more human terms.
- **Tempt them** – When you have the right skills—or ambition—for a role, that's always in your favor. Use your opening intro to sprinkle in brief details that highlight why you're right for the job, and encourage them to keep reading. Tell a story like, “I've been passionate about sales since my first lemonade stand business took off in the fourth grade.” A story will highlight your overall passion for the industry, role, or the company's work.

Step 3: The Pitch

Now comes the fun part. This is where you share why you're the right one for the job. In this next short paragraph, make sure you answer these questions:

- **Why you?** – What makes you a better choice than everyone else? What sets you apart? In two to three sentences, state how your experience—both personal and professional—will add value to the company.
- **Color outside the lines** – All your experience doesn't have to line directly up with a job description. Describe how your unique experiences will bolster your contribution as an employee, and make you a great fit for the company culture.

Step 4: The Get

It's time to get down to brass tacks. You've given your pitch, now's the time for action.

- **Call to action** – If you want something, you need to ask for it. Yes, it will probably feel awkward, but let's be real: whoever's reading your cover letter knows you want an interview, so why sugarcoat it.
- **Give a timeline** – Following up isn't nearly as creepy if you say what you're going to do, and when you're going to do it. State that you'll be following up in a few days or weeks then make sure you actually do it.

Step 5: Closing

Last but certainly not least, is your closing paragraph. Keep this one short with around three to five sentences.

- **Make it easy** – Time is precious, and sometimes we scan before we read. If a reviewer is scanning through your cover letter, make sure the last paragraph sums up exactly why you're the only candidate they should consider—in just a few sentences. Pull out one to two word summaries from each section, and turn that into a few sentences that describe why you're not only right for the job but also excited for the opportunity.

Step 6: Signature

Chances are, you'll be emailing this cover letter, so a physical signature won't be necessary, but just in case, prepare two versions. One should have your digital signature—name, email, and links (if applicable)—and the other, a clearly scanned PDF that includes your signature in blue or black ink.