

# COVER LETTER 101

## WHY DO I NEED A COVER LETTER?

A cover letter provides detailed information on why you are applying to a job and how you are qualified (beyond simply what your resume/LinkedIn highlights). With that, don't simply repeat what's on your resume; instead answer three questions:

1. Who are you?
2. Why this job/company?
3. What makes you the best candidate?

Your cover letter is a sales pitch that can help illuminate skills and experiences you cannot articulate on your resume, which will help you land an interview



## BEFORE YOU WRITE

**RESEARCH:** Before you begin writing your cover letter, be sure you have a deep understanding of the job and company to which you are applying. Research the company's mission, values, purpose, and more. Consider how your values and experience align with their vision for their organization.

**REVIEW:** Next, dive into the job description. A good strategy is to print out a hard copy and mark it up: highlight, make notes about connections between the job and your transferable skills, and most importantly, look for the skills highlighted throughout—these are the important traits they are looking for and what you should highlight in your cover letter.

## 4 STEPS TO WRITING YOUR COVER LETTER

### PARAGRAPH 1: WHO ARE YOU?

First, grab the reader's attention and announce your qualifications.

Next, in one sentence, (indirectly or directly) describe what intrigues you about this organization and/or position.

In closing, provide your elevator pitch in the form of *one powerful sentence* highlighting the key skills you will emphasize in the following paragraphs.

### PARAGRAPH 2: WHY THIS JOB AND COMPANY?

Most applicants skip this part entirely, so doing this will already set you apart!

Regardless of your skills and experiences, the employer wants to know why *you* want this job. Research the company, read articles about the industry/role, and talk to your network.

If you're struggling, ask yourself: *should I be applying to this job?*

### PARAGRAPH 3: WHAT MAKES YOU THE BEST?

This should be the bulk of your letter and where you articulate why *you* are the best candidate.

Don't simply list everything on your resume; *show* that you understand the complexities of the job by giving specific, translatable examples of your professional accomplishments.

Include key terms from the job description and tie each skill to how it would benefit the organization.

### PARAGRAPH 4: SALUTATIONS & NEXT STEPS

In this final section, summarize the qualifications you highlighted in the third paragraph in one sentence.

In addition, be sure to indicate that you look forward to hearing from the company and that you are excited and passionate about this particular opportunity.

## ADDITIONAL TIPS

- Your letter should be  $\frac{3}{4}$  to 1 page in length—long enough to sell yourself, but not too long to bore the reader.
- Proofread! Be sure to review your cover letter multiple times for clarity, correct grammar, and typos. Even better—have someone else review it for you!
- DON'T use “To Whom It May Concern” —with the wonders of Google and modern technology, you should be able to find the name of someone to whom to address your letter. Here is a list in order of preference to address your letter: 1) the hiring manager (the person who would be your boss), 2) the head of the team to which you are applying (your boss's boss or higher), or as a last resort, 3) the recruiting manager or someone in HR. *Side note: do not assume gender/marital status and avoid ma'am, sir, Ms./Mrs./Mr., etc.—just stick to first & last name.*
- DON'T provide or mention references. This is an outdated practice; employers know they can request references from you.
- DON'T focus on the skills/experience you lack. Humility is definitely a value to many employers; however, your cover letter is not the time to point everything you are lacking. Instead stay positive and highlight your transferable skills and experiences!

## REAL-LIFE EXAMPLES:

PARAGRAPH	EXAMPLES
<b>1. WHO ARE YOU?</b>	As an educator with over five years of experience building partnership with families, developing curriculum for over 36 schools, and executing culturally relevant and rigorous pedagogy, I am ready to make a larger impact in supporting students and teachers achieve the best outcomes. Through each of the positions I have held at various types of institutions and organizations, I have been relentlessly committed to ensuring the overall success of students by providing them with the knowledge and resources to successfully finish their degrees. I know that combining my passion for effective academic advising, my experience working with diverse students, and my excitement about furthering Brookhaven College's student success approach to education makes me the perfect addition to the Multicultural Center Academic Advising team.
<b>2. WHY THIS JOB AND COMPANY?</b>	Brookhaven College's students, staff, faculty, and alumni deserve the very best educators. I am confident that my professional knowledge, skills, and passions would provide excellent postsecondary experiences to students. Through my contributions to the college, I believe that I can help transform the lives of students by providing experiences to prepare them to be responsible and productive leaders of society.
<b>3. WHAT MAKES YOU THE BEST?</b>	I have two years of experience teaching high school students in Dallas as well as preparing them for college by educating them about the various processes and knowledge needed to navigate the admissions process and the university setting. I know that this experience would allow me to develop and nurture relationships with students while advising them about college policies and procedures.
<b>4. SALUTATIONS &amp; NEXT STEPS</b>	Throughout my career, I have successfully built relationships with students from diverse backgrounds and proven my ability to produce strong results while managing multiple projects with competing deadlines. I would love the opportunity to speak with you further about how my various skills and experiences could contribute to the great work you are doing at Brookhaven College.