

# Cover Letter Writing Guide

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## Job Search Letters

There are many types of job search letters used for all parts of the job search process: the application process, for networking or inquiring about vacancies, accepting a position, rejecting an offer, delaying a decision, and the thank you letter.

- The goal = create letters that are concise, personalized and professional.
- Free from spelling and grammatical errors and printed on good quality paper.

## Application Cover Letters

*A cover letter is your opportunity to:*

- Personalize your resume and target your skills to that specific employer.
- Introduce yourself, express your interest, summarize your qualifications, present your resume and request an interview.
- Connect your past experiences (from your resume) to your potential future position.
- Highlight your strengths, accomplishments, and sparkling personality 😊
- Explain away any problems or questions. You can explain gaps in employment, etc. Things that may not be clear in your resume.
- Show how you can meet the needs of the company you are applying to.
- Assist the reader in identifying why you should be called in for an interview.

*Do I have to write/send a cover letter with my resume?*

- Yes! Anytime a resume is sent by mail, it **must** be accompanied by a cover letter.
- Whenever possible address the cover letter to a specific person by name and title.
- Remember, preparing the cover letter for a particular company can also get your resume past the first barrier: the screening tool used to evaluate your minimum qualifications for the position.

**Cosmetics of a Cover Letter:**

- The cover letter should be customized for each job opportunity.
- It should be written concisely and formatted well to be most effective. Keep it short and sweet! Four to five paragraphs, no more than a page.
- Paper style and formatting should be consistent with resume (Font, font size, margin size, paper type, etc.)
- Consider signing the letter in blue ink. It implies that the letter is original. The only other color that should be used is black. **ALWAYS SIGN YOUR COVER LETTER!**



[www.southeastmn.edu/CareerServices](http://www.southeastmn.edu/CareerServices)

## ***Basic Structure of a Cover Letter***

Your Name  
Your Address  
City, State, Zip Code  
(You may also include your e-mail  
address and phone number here)

Date

Name of Employer  
His / Her title  
Company / Organization Name  
Street address  
City, State, Zip Code

Dear Mr., Mrs., Ms., Dr. \_\_\_\_\_,

### **Opening Paragraph**

Attract attention. State the reason for writing, naming the position or type of work for which applying. Identify how you learned of the position or how the employer's name was obtained (e.g., Mr. John Smith in the Accounting Department at Minnesota State College Southeast recommended that I contact you).

### **Body: 1-2 Paragraphs**

State the reason for writing to this particular employer (i.e., why you are interested in working for this employer). Specify concrete reasons for the type of work you desire, your goals, and how your education, experiences and other personal qualifications will support your capacity to succeed in the work for which you're applying. A description of significant accomplishments can be made, but the resume should not be repeated any more than absolutely necessary. Talk about your most relevant and distinguishing characteristics. Basically, you are emphasizing your key **qualifications**, selling yourself and elaborating on background areas which will attract a specific employer for the specific field of work or job in which you're interested.

- Using bullets is a good way to list how you meet the qualifications of the position.
- Qualification (state how you meet the qualification as listed on the job description)
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### **Closing Paragraph**

Indicate that your resume is enclosed. Reiterate your interest in the job and mention your desire for an interview (i.e., *Please allow me the opportunity to interview with you at a time and place convenient to your schedule or I am looking forward to the opportunity to further discuss my background as well as the position with you in an interview.* Include your phone number and/or e-mail address to be contacted. Close with a thank you for their time and consideration.

Sincerely,

*Your Signature in Black or Blue Ink*

Your name typed

Enclosure