



# WRITING EFFECTIVE COVER LETTERS

*A clear and concise cover letter can give a prospective employer some insight about you which may not be immediately obvious in a resume.*

## A. Guidelines

- Address someone in authority by name and title. When it is impossible to get this information, use a functional title.
- Tell how you became attracted to this particular company.
- Demonstrate that you have done your “homework” on the company and can see its point of view (current problems, interests, priorities).
- Convey your enthusiasm and commitment.
- Balance professionalism with personal warmth and friendliness. Avoid using generic phrases like “enclosed please find” or “Dear Sir or Madam.”
- Identify at least one thing about you that is unique, such as a special gift for getting along with all kinds of people.
- Be appropriate to the field you are exploring. Stand out, but without coming across as “gimmicky.”
- Point directly to the next step, telling just what you will do to follow through.
- Remain as brief and focused as possible.

## B. Contents

You should customize each cover letter for the employer and the situation; however, the following elements should be found in all your cover letters.

- **Point of Contact.** This is the purpose of the letter. Explain how you learned of the job opening (networking contact, newspaper, etc.).
- **Review the Requirements.** Review the job requirements and be sure you understand the employer’s needs. Then, state your training accordingly, and sell your skills as a qualified person.
- **Describe your Personality.** Use this paragraph to write about your personality and how it will fit the job requirements. State how well you work with people if that appears to be important to the employer. If you are a person who has good organizational skills, has a good attendance record, is a fast learner, etc., then describe these qualities in your letter. Use specific examples whenever possible and try to fit the description of your personality to the job requirements.
- **Refer to your Resume.** Indicate in your letter that you are enclosing a resume, transcripts or other documents for the employer’s consideration. The purpose is to show proof of the statements you have made about your qualifications.
- **Request an Interview.** State that you are available for an interview at a time and place convenient to the employer. Do not forget to write, “I may be contacted at”(telephone number and address).