

LETTERS & REFERENCES

Introductions and Follow Up



CREATING A COVER LETTER

A cover letter accompanies a resume. Its purpose is to tell the reader WHY you are writing or WHY he/she is receiving your resume. You want to convince the employer you are a qualified candidate for a position and should be considered for an interview. Use the same font style and size as you did on your resume.

Address someone in authority by name and title. If you don't have this information, use a functional title, such as Dear Manager of Operations.

Customize your cover letter for each employer and situation. Be sure to include:

- **Reason for contact:** This is the purpose of the letter. Explain how you learned of the job opening (networking contact, job posting, cold call, etc).
- **Requirements:** Review the job requirements. Be sure you understand the employer's needs. State your skills and accomplishments accordingly, and market yourself as a qualified candidate.
- **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 statements you have made about your qualifications.
- **Follow-up plan:** Indicate when you will contact the person to follow up. Don't forget to follow through by marking it on your daily schedule.

USE A CONSISTENT HEADER

Be consistent with the content font style and size used on the headers of every document you submit. By doing so, you have essentially created a letterhead on all your documents.

USING YOUR COVER LETTER IN AN EMAIL

One option to consider is to copy and paste your cover letter into the body of your email. This way, the reader sees the information upon opening the email. A well-written email (cover letter) may pique the interest of the reader enough to open the resume. However, many employers specifically request that applicants send both the resume and the cover letter attached as a .doc file (or some other specification). Following employers' directions for submittals is always first and foremost. If an employer provides no specific directions for submittals, copy and paste the cover letter content in the email body and send it as an attachment as well.

CREATING A REFERENCES PAGE

References are individuals (personal or professional) who can vouch for your work history, skills or character. References should always be on a separate page and include the individual's name, their association to you, their professional affiliation, and a phone number and/or email. DO NOT include them on your resume.

Prepare both documents and carry copies with you to the interview. However, ONLY submit them to the employer if requested. Remember, a company may receive hundreds of resumes and cover letters. For efficiency, a company does not request these documents unless they are truly considering you for a position.

BEFORE you include someone in your reference list:

Ask the person for permission to be on your reference list. Tell your references that employers may contact them concerning your skills and character traits. Talk to your references and discuss what you want employers to know about you. List at least 3–5 people who can discuss you from a professional standpoint – rather than as a friend or acquaintance.