

Lecture 03: Writing a cover/ motivation letter

1. Cover letter

A cover letter is a one-page business letter that you submit when applying to a job, along with your resume. As a piece of persuasive writing, your cover letter will aim to convey to the employer why you're a great candidate for the role.

With your cover letter, you'll aim to:

Highlight your qualifications: You'll show how your skills and experience relate to the employer's needs for a specific position.

Showcase your motivation: You'll demonstrate your enthusiasm for the specific position and the organization.

Reflect your voice and written communication skills: You'll give the employer a sense of your personality and writing style.

Before writing your cover letter:

RESEARCH THE EMPLOYER

Review the firm's website and LinkedIn page.

Speak with current or previous employees.

Read articles and social media for current news.

ANALYZE THE JOB DESCRIPTION

Look for skills, duties, and qualifications of the job so you can design your letter to match these as much as possible.

REFLECT ON YOUR EXPERIENCE AND MOTIVATION

Identify skills and personal qualities you have developed which will be useful in this role. Ask yourself:

What attracts you about this role/company/industry?

What have you done in classes, projects, work experiences, internships, volunteer, activities, travel, etc., that is similar to the duties required of the job

Writing Your Cover Letter: Format and Structure

Keep cover letters short—three or four paragraphs and less than one page.

Use the active voice, keeping your tone positive and professional. Avoid beginning too many sentences with "I".

Read your cover letter aloud to catch repetitious words and typos. Make sure that the grammar, sentence structure and spelling are correct.

When applying online, upload your cover letter as a PDF file, unless another format is specified. When sending your resume and cover letter by email you may write a short note or paste your cover letter in the body of your email (without the address header) and also attach the PDF file.

Address your letter to the specific individual who can hire you, if this is known. If the name is not included in the job description, address the letter to Dear Hiring Manager or to the title mentioned in the job description.

List your contact information at the top of the page either in the same format as your resume or on the top left or right margin as shown in the samples.

INCLUDE:

- your contact information
- date
- employer's name, title and address
- a greeting (addressed to Ms., Mr., or Dr. with the employer's last name)
- cover letter content
- your signature or typed name

Writing Your Cover Letter: Content

Your cover letter should answer who, what, when, where and why you are applying for the opportunity.

Introduction: State the position for which you are applying, where you found out about the job, who you are and why you are interested in/qualified for this job and company in particular. If you spoke with someone in the company or were referred by a connection ask if you can include that person's name and mention your conversation.

Body: The body of the cover letter may be one or two paragraphs. Highlight your qualifications and emphasize your strengths which are most relevant to the industry, organization, and position. Be specific. Use 2-3 examples of your work or academic experience to communicate your motivation and how your skills and experience prepared you for the job. Structure your letter based on relevance not chronology. Explain how you will be valuable to the employer. Do not discuss or apologize if you feel you lack experience or accomplishments.

Conclusion: Thank the reader and reaffirm your interest in the position or organization. Keep your tone positive and enthusiastic. Your cover letter should be specific to the firm and explain why you would be a good fit to work there.

Below (page 4) is an example of the cover letter format

Finally review your cover letter using the following checklist (page 5)

2. Motivation letter

The difference between motivation letter VS a cover letter is that a cover letter gives specific examples of how your job experience and skills match the opening you are applying for. A motivation letter, on the other hand, focuses more on your personality, interests, and motives for applying.

The motivation letter is usually used when applying for something e.g. for acceptance to a university, to a student programme, to a non-profit organization for voluntary work etc.

You have to explain why you are interested in the specific activity, your motives, why you want to study or attend the programme, why you choose the specific university or programme etc.

PS: sometimes a motivation letter is used to apply for jobs, but that depends on what is required to be submitted by the recruiting destination.

How to write Motivation Letter for Scholarship

From,

(Your full name)

(Your home address)

(Your city, state, postal number)

(your phone number/ email)

The date

To,

(Title and/ or the full name of the reader)

The readers' Home address

City and postal code

Subject-(-----)

Dear (reader's name/ sir/madam),

The first or the introductory paragraph is usually an introduction of yourself. It should contain information like which program you are applying to and in what university. It should also say something about your current status. You can also describe why you think taking this course will be beneficial, according to you.

The second paragraph is more elaborate on personal details. Here you can write about your academic career, what your teachers and professors think about you and your inspiration on coming into this field of study. You can also describe how you collected all the relevant information about all your possible choices of universities for the course you want to take and why you think getting admitted into this particular institution matters the most.

In the following paragraph, you can continue with your aim for the future and what you have planned during the study time and after achieving your desired degree. You can also say what have you done till now for making a dream come true like possible internships and workshops.

This is the last or the concluding paragraph where you need to bring the whole buildup of the letter to a proper end. The above letter has established your dreams and passions, and this paragraph justifies why it is a good choice to give this scholarship to you. The tone here has to be neutral. Mention how other candidates are also deserving, but how you can make the changes in the world and how your passion is unmatched. End the letter with a grateful sentence.

Sincerely,

(Signature)

Your full name.

Cover Letter Content

Header from Your Resume

Date

Name of Contact (if available)

Job Title of Contact

Company Name

(Company Street Address

Company City, State Zip Code)

Dear Name of Recipient, (if available, or Hiring Manager, Recruiting Team, etc.)

Introductory Paragraph:

Think of this as an opportunity to catch the reader's attention. Your introduction should be brief, and answer the following questions (in no particular order).

- *Why are you writing this cover letter?* (What are you applying for?)
- *What excites you about this employer/company/position?* (Why them? Be brief and specific. This can showcase your research into the company, motivation or interests. If you've met or spoken with someone, this can be included as well, but be sure to ask the individual first.)
- *Who are you?* (School, background etc.; What can you contribute? Include key skills that you will expand on in your body paragraphs.)

The Body:

The body paragraphs are an opportunity for you to tell stories about your experiences, highlighting skills and qualities, and making a clear connection to the role you're applying for. What are the most important things you want to share with the employer given the role you're applying for? The body should be 1-2 paragraphs, they should **NOT** repeat exactly what's on your resume, but rather, they're an opportunity to explain your resume in a different way.

For each:

1. Identify the skills, experiences, qualities that you would like to focus on in this paragraph
2. Support the skills, experiences, and qualities of focus with examples that demonstrate them
3. Demonstrate how this ties back to the position, if necessary

The Conclusion:

Finish strong and keep it simple. Reiterate your interest in the role and/or position and thank the reader.

Sincerely,
Your Name

Your Cover Letter Checklist

Put time into polishing your cover letter and making sure it articulates a narrative that represents you and your skills, as well as how they connect to the position and/or company you are applying for.

Format

- Is it one page or less?
- Are you using an appropriate font size (10-12pt font)?
- Is it grammatically correct and free from spelling errors?
- Are the margins even on all four sides of the page (0.5- 1")?
- Does it match the design of your resume?
- Is it organized in a way that's easy to read and follow along?
- Has it been addressed to the appropriate recipient?
- Is it written in the active voice?
- Have you confirmed which format is required to save and submit your document? (Example: PDF)

Content

- Did you research the company?
- Is your research reflected in your cover letter?
- Did you use keywords from the job/internship posting?
- Have you thoughtfully connected your experience to the role?
- Have you differentiated your experiences from the way they are listed in your resume?
- Does it include specific experiences to highlight your skills?
- Is it focused on what you can contribute to the company (not what they can do for you)?