

COVER LETTERS

THE BODY OF THE LETTER

First, it's not a cover letter, it's a SALES PITCH. Most letters are three-four paragraphs; introduction, key points that make you a match for the position, personal qualities you can offer the employer, and a request for a personal interview.

Second, businesses are inundated with cover letters. The First Paragraph is CRITICAL! "Get them at 'Hello'."

Ideas and tips to capture the readers' interest from the start:

- Mention a current employee, by name, who has said good things about this employer
- Refer to Professors, Supervisors, and Community Leaders who speak well of you
- Mention several interesting facts that you have learned through research and networking
- Talk about your most impressive campus, work, or community contributions
- Refer to any problems you have solved or prevented
- Provide examples of your creativity, work ethic, or problem-solving skills
- Indicate your eagerness to make a contribution with this employer
- Show that you are familiar with their products, services, goals, finances, and challenges

Sample: "My study abroad and travel experience throughout Latin America has helped me gain cultural awareness, language proficiency, and the ability to navigate unfamiliar areas, including cities, business methodologies, professional cultures, and individual interactions. These and other experiences, plus my desire to travel and relocate, make me an excellent fit for your Junior Level International Business Development position."

Sample: "Four years ago, I read an article about Company Name in the Journal of the American Medical Association. It captured my interest and enthusiasm immediately. In fact, I based my college career on it! I am now preparing to graduate with a Bachelor of Science degree in Chemistry and a minor in Biochemistry."

Third, focus on the employer's needs (not yours). Explain why you are the answer to their hiring decision!

Use the job description to write your cover letter. Along with your resume, its purpose is to show the employer that your skills, qualifications, and training are a match for the position, thereby, getting you an interview. Tailor each letter using "key words" from the job description so your resume will rise to the surface of the employers' Applicant Tracking Systems.

THE CLOSING OF THE LETTER

Employers know they need to hire new personnel, but the process can be very time consuming, so many hiring managers continually postpone the job of hiring new talent. They want this task to be easier. You can make it easier for them (and be the answer to their needs) by being pro-active. If you plan to wait for them to call you, you may be waiting a very long time. If, on the other hand, you call them, you have already demonstrated that you are very interested in the position. Employers want a "problem-solver" on their team. When done professionally, "pro-active" beats "passive" any day of the week. So, your closing paragraph should look something like this:

Sample: "I look forward to discussing how my skills and qualifications can meet your needs. I will call your office the week of May 15 to see if a personal interview can be arranged. Thank you for your time and consideration."

Additional MUSTS:

1. Use business letter formatting, on high quality "resume paper" so all your professional documents, including reference sheets, look matched and professional.
2. Get the full name, correct spelling and pronunciation, as well as correct business title of the person you'll be sending the cover letter to. Check the website or call the company.
3. Your cover letter must be neat and error-free. An employer judges you on your ability to communicate and present information.
4. Cover letters should be interesting, to the point, and no more than one page.

What should you do if you don't have the necessary skills?

- Substitute another similar skill. Explain why the similar skill is valuable to the position.
- Develop the skills by taking additional classes or training.
- Indicate your willingness receive additional training and your ability to learn quickly.
- Leave the door open. If you are not sure you have all the required skills, you can always add a sentence indicating that you are willing to consider other jobs, departments, or locations within the company.

Sample: I am applying for the position of Director of Public Relations but would also consider any other Public Relations or Communications positions within your company.

Sample: I am applying for the sales position in the greater Detroit area but am also open to other locations, especially within New England.

SAMPLE LETTER

1000 Main Street
Anytown, VT 87654
December 1, XXXX

Mr. John Wilson
National Fleet Manager
KLM Company
1000 Main Street
Anytown, MI 45678

Dear Mr. Wilson:

Having grown up in a family where my father is part owner of an auto dealership, I was really excited to see a Business Management Internship opportunity on the KLM website. I already speak the "automobile" language, and am an avid reader of automobile magazines and professional journals. I would love to learn more about fleet acquisition and management; another important component of the automobile industry.

As you can see from my resume, I am a rising senior at Norwich University, where I have a 3.4 GPA. I am a Business Management major, with a minor in Finance. I have also had internships the past two summers where I have:

- Received intensive training from Internal Auditing staff
- Worked with auditing software including OnBase, Blackline, and Lawson
- Performed various financial risk and control tests
- Studied the Finance and Insurance operations of three dealerships, and
- Gathered, compiled and analyzed data for the Vermont portion of the NADA website.

My internships and strong academic background have helped me develop professionalism and critical thinking skills. My collegiate, high school, and sports activities have helped me develop excellent written, verbal, and interpersonal communication skills, as well as strong organizational and time management skills.

I believe my exposure to the automobile business, as well as the other skills and qualities I would bring to the internship make me a candidate who could make an immediate impact. I will call your office the week of December 14 to see if a personal interview can be arranged. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Will U. Hireme