

Cover Letter Planning Guide



What is a cover letter?

An effective cover letter inspires an employer to read your resume. The cover letter demonstrates familiarity with the organization and emphasizes how your experience meets the needs of the organization. Communication skills, attention to detail, enthusiasm, and style are all demonstrated through a well-written letter. A cover letter should not re-state the information on your resume, but should rather show relationships between your skills and the position you are applying for.



Where do I begin?

To start your cover letter, begin by thinking about the following questions:

- What unique skills/abilities do you have that match the position requirements?
- Why should they interview/hire you?
- Why do you want to work for that particular employer?
- How can the employer benefit from your education, experience, etc.?



Does MCC offer cover letter assistance?

Yes! Drop off your cover letter for review at the Career Center. Please allow 48 hours for feedback. Once you have made corrections to your cover letter, you may want to make an appointment with our professional staff.



For additional information connect to: www.monroecc.edu/go/resumes

COVER LETTER TIPS

- Limit your cover letter to 3-4 brief paragraphs, aim for a total length of one-half to three-quarters of a page.
- Be specific when describing abilities, skills, honors, activities and experience; use examples.
- Fill in the "blanks" your resume leaves out; your cover letter provides the employer with additional information with who you are and what you've done.
- Avoid using slang terms, jargon or exaggerating when writing your cover letter.
- A cover letter should indicate that you have a clear understanding of your career goals and job objectives (put some thought and research into this process).
- Margin your cover letter to the left, no indentations.
- Single-space your paragraphs.
- Leave three or four blank spaces in which to sign your name.
- Sign your cover letter using blue ink, this implies that the letter is original.
- Avoid using the pronoun "I" when beginning every sentence.
- Tailor a new cover letter for each employer, revise paragraphs for every letter.
- Make sure your envelope matches the same professional look of your cover letter and resume, avoid handwriting your envelope.
- Print out a clean, fresh, copy to send (avoid white out and erasing).
- Make a copy of the cover letter you send for your files.

COVER LETTER STRATEGIES

Addressing your cover letter

What if there is no contact name in the job advertisement? Who do you send your cover letter to? Find one! This will take some research, either via telephone or the Internet. You may want to call the target employer and get an actual name of a recipient for your cover letter. This will set you apart from most applicants. If you are unable to address your letter to a specific individual with his or her correct title, you may want to write "Dear Employer" or "Dear Human Resources."



Begin with a strong "hook"

Catch an employers attention immediately by advertising your strengths and unique skills. Provide the reader with evidence as to why you are the best candidate for the position.

▪ **Example:**

Dear Mr. Jones,

Having broken sales records and exceeded sales quotas in all my previous positions, and a recently completed Associate's degree in Business from Monroe Community College, I am an ideal candidate for the Sales Manager position at Paychex.

Emphasize how "you" will contribute to the organization/employer

Avoid using the pronouns "I," "me," and "my" consistently throughout your cover letter. It is a common mistake. Redirect the emphasis from yourself to the employer and inform them how they can benefit from "you." Your letter should be employer centered, not self centered. Ask yourself "How can I be of service to this employer?"

▪ **Pronoun Overuse Example:**

I am enclosing **my** resume for your review because **I** am very interested in obtaining a full-time position at Ace Financial to further **my** experience and skills in banking. **I** am well qualified for this position. In addition to the strong quantitative and analytical skills **I** have developed as a business major and in **my** work experience, **I** have a proven ability to stay focused for long hours under pressure.

▪ **Revised Example:**

I am applying for the Investment Banking Analyst position where **my** combination of economics training and high-tech experience will add value to **your** operations. Please consider the following: **You** will gain from my strong financial background, which includes a recent Associate in Science degree in Business Administration, coupled with experience researching and trading securities as an investment intern, resulting in returns of 200%.

Cover Letter Essentials

- Typed and laser printed (use the same font as your resume)
- Written on the same paper that matches your resume and envelope
- Original (avoid mailing the same exact letter to multiple employers)
- Positive, professional, confident and enthusiastic sounding
- Error free (have someone proofread it)
- Brief and to the point (usually one page)
- Use an outline system to organize your thoughts before writing
- Reference job code or # if mentioned in the ad
- Provide additional information and details which are not on your resume or expand on your main selling points
- Drop off your cover letter for review/critique at the Career Center

COVER LETTER FORMAT

Your Street Address
City, State Zip Code
Telephone Number
Today's Date

Name of Person
Title
Company/Organization
Street Address
City, State Zip Code

Dear Ms./Mr.:

FIRST PARAGRAPH - INTRODUCTION:

State the reason for writing this cover letter. Name the specific job title or type of work for which you are applying. Indicate where you learned of the opening (newspaper, Job Connection/Internet, MCC Career Center, Job Fair, friend, etc.). State that you believe that you possess/have a background that deserves consideration for the position.

SECOND PARAGRAPH - BODY:

Explain why you are interested in the position and field of work or why you are interested in working for that employer. Explain your qualifications and achievements (this may include your academic background, work experience and or skills). Try not to repeat exact information found in your resume, however make reference to the enclosed resume. State how you could be successful in this position, why you are qualified and how you match the requirements of the job description. Mention specific accomplishments that directly relate to the field of work for which you are applying and why you enjoy that work (you may want to cite a specific experience on the job, project, committee, or task that you worked on).

THIRD PARAGRAPH - CLOSING:

Indicate that you are interested in meeting with the employer to further discuss the position and that you welcome an interview. Refer to your address and telephone number above should they require any additional information or should they request an interview of you. Indicate times/dates that you will be available, if necessary. Thank the reader/employer for reading your resume and cover letter and their thoughtful consideration of you for the position.

Sincerely,

Your Signature

Your Name Typed

Enclosure(s)

SAMPLE COVER LETTER

1234 Resume Boulevard
Rochester, NY 14620
May 5, 2004

Ms. Mary Employer
Director of Human Resources
XYZ Corporation
1234 Cover Letter Avenue
Rochester, NY 14620

Dear Ms. Employer,

I am writing to express my interest in the Senior Interior Designer position at Paychex, which is posted on your website. My professional experience and my interest in corporate facilities design are an excellent fit for this position, and I am enthusiastic about joining the professional staff at Paychex. My resume is enclosed for your consideration.

Through my education at Monroe Community College and my co-op experience at ABC Employer, I have enjoyed designing and planning attractive and useful interiors for local businesses. This includes 4+ years of experience in retail and office furnishings sales. In addition, my experiences and expertise in interior design include the following:

- Experienced in coordinating and implementing all aspects of project design, space planning, fabric selection, drawings, furniture specification, accessories, and design presentation.
- Specific attention to detail and set up of jobs within allotted time and budget constraints.
- Excellent interpersonal and team building skills with direct experience of being a liaison between departments.
- General knowledge of AutoCAD and Haworth Furniture systems.

I am especially interested in this position because I have a direct interest in managing and designing cost-effective commercial offices. As a result, I am confident that I would enhance the function and quality of interior space at Paychex. I look forward to the opportunity to speak with you in person to discuss my qualifications further. Please contact me at 585-555-5555 to schedule an interview, or if you are in need of additional information. Thank you for your consideration.

Kind Regards,

Your Signature

Name

Enclosure(s)