

WHAT IS A COVER LETTER?

A cover letter is a formal, customized letter officially stating your interest in a job. It is your opportunity to highlight your abilities, expand on your qualifications beyond your résumé, and explain why you are the ideal candidate for the job.

TO WHOM DO YOU SEND THE LETTER TO?

Cover letters should be addressed to a specific person rather than “To whom it may concern” or “Dear Sir or Madam.” Look on the job description for the individual who should receive the letter. If none is listed, do some research on the organization and determine who is likely to make the hiring decision.

SUCCESSFUL COVER LETTERS:

1. Directly address the job description, listing desired or required skills and qualifications.
2. Elaborate on experiences and education listed in the résumé instead of restating the information.
3. Use words specific to your industry or job description – your résumé should cater to it.
4. Use concrete examples, including numbers when applicable.

FORMAT - WHAT'S APPROPRIATE?

Include:

- Same header as the résumé
- Simplistic but effective language
- Concrete examples
- Same font (and font size) as your résumé
- Specific displays of skills
- Call to action in conclusion

Common mistakes:

- Incorrect letter format – see example!
- Use of complicated words
- Run-on sentences
- Unsupported claims – give examples
- Typos – be sure to proofread!
- Wrong tones

QUICK TIPS FOR WRITING

- Like a résumé, it should only be one page.
- Do your research based on the job description; cater your cover letter heavily to the job posting. Have an identifiable reason to apply to the company, if you can.
- Avoid excessively using “I.” Just like your résumé, use action verbs!

Need help with your cover letter?

Center for Career and Professional Development

Baker Patillo Student Center Third Floor, Room 3.302

Appointments:

ccpd@sfasu.edu

936.468.3305

EXAMPLE COVER LETTER

John Doe

johndoe@gmail.com | (123)456-7890

Today's Date (January 30, 20XX)

Recipient's Name

Recipient's Position

Company Name

Company Address

Dear Mr./Miss _____, (Recipient's Name)

Why are you writing? I recently applied for the _____ position. While actively searching, I found this position available through _____ and have filled out an application. Currently, I am working toward a _____ (degree type) with a (month) 20XX completion date from Stephen F. Austin State University. I am very interested in the opportunity to use my (short list of relevant skills) that I have gained in the past four years.

How do your qualifications fit this job? Explain your achievements and qualifications, especially those that meet the requirements listed on the job description. Here is where you expand on details in your résumé. Refer the reader to your general qualifications on your enclosed résumé. Also, highlight any points that will be of specific interest to this employer. Incorporate information that reflects your knowledge of the company and industry.

Summarize briefly how your career aspirations and work skills uniquely align with the company to help set you apart from other candidates.

Ask about the next step. I am very interested in this position and the opportunity to learn from a reputable company. I can be reached at johndoe@gmail.com or (123)456-7890 to set up an interview or review next steps. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

John Doe

Schedule a document critique: <https://sfasu.joinhandshake.com/>

Further questions? Email: ccpd@sfasu.edu or visit sfasu.edu/ccpd