

Writing a Cover Letter

Objectives <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Students will identify the basic structure of a cover letter.• Students will write a cover letter.	Time frame to Complete 2 or 3 one hour sessions
Standard(s) Addressed in Lesson	Convey Ideas in Writing
Benchmark(s) Addressed in Lesson	W.4.3; W.4.10; W.4.11; W.4.19
Materials <p>Teachers can use a variety of Cover Letter models found in books and available as templates on Microsoft Word. It is quite easy to print off simple models of resumes from Microsoft Word and use as guides during class. Also see two samples included with lesson.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Handout: <i>Cover Letter Information</i> (for students)• Handout: <i>Teacher Resource</i> (a guide for teachers on the parts and purposes of a cover letter)• Handout: <i>Cover Letter Template</i>	
Activities <p><u>Step 1</u> Introduce students to the cover letter and its purpose.</p> <p><u>Step 2</u> Go over the portions of the cover letter and their function: (1) Introduction, (2) the Body, which highlights skills and experiences relevant to the job, and (3) Closing, ask for interview.</p> <p><u>Step 3</u> Have students create a cover letter for one particular job they have in mind, or make up one. Remind students that a cover letter must change depending on the job. Use a cover letter model from Microsoft or the internet to help students.</p> <p><u>Step 4</u> Have students edit and revise their cover letter. Emphasize the need for correct spelling, punctuation, subject-verb agreement, capitalization, and other writing conventions. Once they have done a rough copy student can reproduce their final version of the cover letter on the computer.</p>	
Assessment/Evidence Completed cover letters	
Adaptations for Beginning Students <p>Beginning students can focus on creating one general cover letter which may be slightly altered for each different job. Beginners should also develop the skills of writing by supporting their claims of being correct for the job through examples and reasons. Beginners should work on basic writing and language skills such as subject-verb agreement, capitalization, and good spelling and not necessarily focus on changing sentence styles or structures.</p>	

Adaptations for Advanced Students

Advanced students should be writing multiple cover letters with each being geared toward a specific job. Different jobs will probably have different skill and experience requirements and therefore a different letter for each job would be appropriate. Additionally, advanced students should employ a greater range of vocabulary and sentence types in their cover letters.

Cover Letter Information

To be effective, your cover letter should follow the basic format of a typical business letter and should address three general issues:

1. Why you are writing

2. What you have to offer

3. How you will follow-up

Why You Are Writing

In some cases, you may have been referred to a potential employer by a friend or acquaintance. Be sure to mention this mutual contact, by name, up front since it is likely to encourage your reader to keep reading!

If you are writing in response to a job posting, indicate where you learned of the position and the title of the position. More importantly, express your enthusiasm and the likely match between your credentials and the position's qualifications.

If you are writing a prospecting letter a letter in which you inquire about possible job openings - state your specific job objective. Since this type of letter is unsolicited, it is even more important to capture the reader's attention.

If you are writing a networking letter to approach an individual for information, make your request clear.

What You Have To Offer

In responding to an advertisement, refer specifically to the qualifications listed and illustrate how your particular abilities and experiences relate to the position for which you are applying. In a prospecting letter express your potential to fulfill the employer's needs rather than focus on what the employer can offer you. You can do this by giving evidence that you have researched the organization thoroughly and that you possess skills used within that organization.

Emphasize your achievements and problem-solving skills. Show how your education and work skills are transferable, and thus relevant, to the position for which you are applying.

How You Will Follow Up

Close by reiterating your interest in the job and letting the employer know how they can reach you and include your phone number and/or email address. Or bid directly for the job interview or informational interview and indicate that you will follow-up with a telephone call to set up an appointment at a mutually convenient time. Be sure to make the call within the time frame indicated.

In some instances, an employer may explicitly prohibit phone calls or you may be responding to a "blind want-ad" which precludes you from this follow-up. Unless this is the case, make your best effort to reach the organization. At the very least, you should confirm that your materials were received and that your application is complete.

If you are applying from outside the employer's geographic area you may want to indicate if you'll be in town during a certain time frame (this makes it easier for the employer to agree to meet with you).

In conclusion, you may indicate that your references are available on request. Also, if you have a portfolio or writing samples to support your qualifications, state their availability.

Teacher Resource: Cover Letters

OBJECTIVE: At the end of the lesson students will understand parts of a cover letter, the purpose of the cover letter, and how to format and proofread prior to mailing.

- 1) What is a cover letter?
 - a. Introduces you to the employer
 - b. Only one page long
 - d. Prepares reader for your resume
 - i. Why you are writing
 - ii. Why you are a good match for the job
 - iii. Sample of your writing abilities
 - e. Parts of a cover letter
 - i. Heading
 1. Contains your contact information
 2. Date of your letter
 3. Name of the person the letter is addressed to
 - a. Verify the person's title
 - ii. Introduction
 1. Greeting
 2. Specify the position you are applying for
 3. Tell how you learned about the job
 4. State why you are the best candidate for the job
 - iii. Body
 1. Use one paragraph for each one of the qualifications you want to highlight
 2. Give specific examples
 3. Make references to your resume DO NOT repeat it
 - iv. Closing
 1. Remind the prospective employer you are the right candidate for the job and why
 2. Ask for an interview
 3. Thank the person for taking the time to read your information
 4. Tell them you will follow up with a phone call
- 2) Proofread
 - a. Wait a few hours after writing the letter
 - b. Read letter
 - c. Give to another person to help you with proofreading

Template of Standard Business Format (Cover Letter)

Your street or box number
City, State, Zip

Contact's Name
Contact's Title
Organization Name
Street Address
City, State, Zip

Dear Mr. OR Ms. (person's last name only):

Paragraph 1: Say what position you are interested in, and how you found out about it. If you found out about the job through a friend or family member who works for the company, include that also. In one or two sentences, say why you are interested in the position.

Paragraph 2: Explain what skills and experiences you have that would make you successful in this job. You can include examples from classes you have taken, previous jobs, or other activities. Explain how these experiences would make you good at this job. Do not just repeat your resume, but highlight interesting things about you that will show the employer that you will be good at this job.

Paragraph 3: Show that you know something about the company you are applying to. It looks very unprofessional to appear clueless about what kind of a place you might work for.

Paragraph 4: State that you would like a personal interview to further discuss this opportunity. If there is something unusual about your resume, explain it here. Tell the employer how you should get in touch with one another; for example, say that if you do not hear from them in two or three weeks, you will call them to follow up on your application. Conclude by thanking them for their time and attention, and express the wish to meet them in the near future.

Sincerely,

Your signature (leave 4 blank spaces for this)

Your name in print

Cover Letter: Example #1

1234 Clifton Ave
Cincinnati, OH 12345

January 5, 2010

Ms. Reynolds
Team Recruiter
Convergys
1212 Reading Road
Cincinnati, OH 45612

Dear Ms. Reynolds:

I am writing to express interest in the administrative assistant position, as described in your advertisement in The Cincinnati Enquirer. As an entry-level career job, it seems to me a perfect fit between my organizational and interpersonal skills, and the needs of your company for someone reliable who is willing to make a commitment.

I am very interested in making a career as an administrative assistant, as I feel that my experiences and interests make me well qualified for the position. I understand the importance of maintaining an organized and efficient office, and do not underestimate the weight of my responsibilities within the organization. Furthermore, I have experience with both Microsoft Office, including Word and Excel which I gained through a computer course in college. In addition, I work well with people from all walks of life, and I know how to interact professionally with both co-workers and clients.

Convergys is a reputable and important company in the Cincinnati area that manages the human-resource, customer service, and financial needs of many other community organizations. As such, it is a perfect setting for a person to enter the professional field and eventually build up their career, which is why this is such a great opportunity.

I thank you very much for this position. Please find my resume attached. I am eager to interview with you at a time of your convenience, and understanding the pressures of time, I will call to follow up on my application should I not hear from you in two weeks. I thank you again sincerely for your time, and I hope to hear from you soon.

Sincerely,

Jasmine Sanchez

Cover Letter: Example #2

5454 Clover Drive
Cincinnati, OH 12345

Mr. Mark Peterson
Owner
2233 Reading Road
Cincinnati, OH 69874

Dear Mr. Peterson:

I am writing in regard to the job opening as a roofer in your company. I was referred to you by Thomas Jenkins, an employee of yours and an acquaintance of mine, and I feel that this is a job that I would be well qualified for.

I have worked in various types of home repair, including painting and refinishing woodwork, as well as dry-walling and carpeting. As such, I know how to use the tools for all those trades, including sanding machines, drills etc., and I quickly master new ones. Furthermore, I am accustomed to working with toxic chemicals, and understand the importance of work safety on any construction site, large or small. Also, I speak a little Spanish, and am used to working on construction teams where many languages are involved. Attached, I have included my application for further reference.

I understand that your company is small and local, and that because of this it is especially important to deliver quality results, most businesses growing as a result of word of mouth, and I am committed to that goal.

Thank you for taking the time to consider my application, and I look forward to speaking with you further. If I have not heard from you in two weeks, I will contact you to follow up on this application. Thank you again, and I hope to hear from you soon.

Sincerely,

Joseph Hamilton

