

Cover Letter Content Format Guide: 4 Steps

1. Contact Information

To begin your cover letter, include both the employer's and your contact information. See the example below:

2. Introduction: *Find out to whom you're writing*

Put yourself in the hiring manager's shoes for a second. **Would you like to be addressed as "Dear Sir or Madame?" or "To whom it may concern?"**

"Dear Sir or Madame" makes you sound like you're from the year 1865, and "to whom it may concern" is very irritating to hiring managers.

You can easily avoid this problem by doing your research. Look through the company's website, LinkedIn, or even give the company a call to ask for the hiring manager's name. Even if you get it wrong, it still looks like you've made an effort.

Introduce yourself

In the first paragraph of your cover letter, **begin by telling the employer the position you are applying for and how you learned about the opportunity.**

The rest of this paragraph should briefly present basic info about yourself, including: degree, area of study/expertise, and your career goals in terms of how they align with the goals of the company.

3. Sell Yourself

The second paragraph should respond directly to the job description written by the hiring manager. **Describe how your previous job experiences, skills, and abilities will allow you to meet the company's needs.** To make that easier, you can (and should) literally include words and phrases from the job description in your cover letter.

No bombast! The rule of thumb is that you're allowed to be as boastful as you want – so long as you have the evidence to back it up!

To go the extra mile, do some research about the company, and try to find out what they are doing — and why — given the current state of their industry. In a third paragraph, explain how you can fit into that schema, and help push the company forward and achieve any goals you suspect they may have.

4. Conclusion

The final paragraph is called the "call to action" portion of your cover letter. Inform them that you'd love to get interviewed. Tell them that you'll be in contact with them in a week if you don't hear back. Thank them for spending the time to read your letter.

Cover Letter Page Format Guide: 4 Steps

Aside from the content on the page, the actual look and feel of the document is also an important aspect of the cover letter. Elements such as margins, font size and style, and alignment all factor in to the hiring manager's overall impression of you.

Here are a few quick tips when styling your own:

- **1" – 1.5" margins are always a safe bet.** If you having trouble fitting everything on one page there is some wiggle room, but be careful not to make the content look crammed together
- **Don't go below a 12-point font** unless absolutely necessary. Anything below 12 can strain the eyes.
- **Font style is really a matter of preference.** Try to choose one that looks professional or that matches what the employer uses on their website. Keep in mind that different styles will change the size of the font.
- **Maintain a uniform alignment throughout.** We suggest keeping all paragraphs left-aligned.

Formatting For Applicant Tracking Systems

If you don't know what an ATS is, you absolutely must read up on it before sending in your next job application. Applicant tracking systems are mostly designed to read through resumes, sifting through keywords and key-phrases to statistically determine whether to let you through to the next stage. **70% of jobs are filled via an applicant tracking system.**

Some ATS software is designed to read through cover letters as well, while others are not. You might as well be completely prepared.

The good news is that simply by following the instructions written above, your letter should already be in good shape. If you've responded directly to the hiring manager's job description, and included language from it in your own cover letter, you already have a high likelihood of hitting statistically important keywords and phrases.

Does anyone read cover letters?

*Yes, someone will read it. Will they read it carefully? It depends on the hiring manager. Some use the letters to "weed out" candidates out of a huge stack, while others believe that the candidate's interview skills are more important. Either way, **you're going to need to write a strong cover letter, in order to give yourself a higher chance of getting a job.***