

The Purpose of a Cover Letter

It is important to keep in mind when writing cover letters that the purpose of a cover letter is to motivate the reader to look at your resume.

To catch the attention of your preferred employer clearly explain:

- The reason for your application
- What you have to offer the employer
- Why you want to work for this company
- What the next steps will be

You will want to demonstrate both enthusiasm and professionalism and show that you have done your research into the company - their needs, mission or vision statement, company culture and anything else that demonstrates you understand the job and its value to the company.

The Structure of a Cover Letter

Let's look at the basic structure of a cover letter. Think of it as a meal; the appetizer is the first paragraph, the meat and potatoes are the second paragraph, and the dessert is the third paragraph.

For example:

The Appetizer:

This is the first paragraph, the introduction, where you tell them why you are writing. The intention is to make them interested in reading more.

- Clearly state who you are and why you are writing.
- Give any compelling reasons why you are applying to the position, e.g.,
"I was excited to see XYZ posting on JobsNow as it speaks to my background in X and my passion in Y."
- Incorporate the research you have done, including employees you have spoken to via networking and informational interviewing.

Remember, this is the appetizer (teaser). At a restaurant, if the appetizer is fantastic the odds that you will have a great meal are pretty good, so people stay and keep eating! In a cover letter, you want to think about your hook and get them to keep reading so that they want to know more.

Tip Sheet: COVER LETTERS - BUILDING

The Main Course:

This is the second paragraph, the body, where you tell them what you have to offer. Help the reader to connect the dots between you, your skills, and the position they are needing to fill.

- Make your case, draw connections between the job requirements and your own skills and experiences.
- Highlight one or two specific accomplishments but do not repeat your resume.
- If you are making a career switch, state your case.
- Give examples to describe the skills and experiences that make you a match for the job along with the attributes and qualities that make you a good fit with their culture.

Remember, this is the meat and potatoes, the heaviest or largest part of the meal. The most memorable part, where you will convince the reader you are worth interviewing.

The Dessert:

This is the third and last paragraph and the closing. You can indicate how will you follow-up and get them to take action by letting them know your interest in a conversation (interview).

- Restate your interest and enthusiasm.
- Recap what you can do for them and how the department will benefit from hiring you.
- Make a request for an interview and outline your follow-up.
- Thank the reader for their time and consideration

Note, this is the dessert. End the meal on a great note and make a lasting impression to land an interview.