



COVER LETTERS

What is a Cover Letter?

A cover letter usually accompanies your application for a position. The role of the cover letter (a.k.a. letter of application) is to interpret your qualifications for the reader to convince him or her of your fit for the advertised position. Cover letters are typically 1-2 pages in length.

Your cover letter is not analogous to a fax cover sheet. Instead think of it as a mini-thesis in the sense that your cover letter allows you to make an argument for your suitability for the job. Written in the first person, it also gives you the opportunity to express your voice and to show your interest, professionalism, and gift for the written word.

Important (but often forgotten) Tips:

- Read the job announcement closely
- Write each letter specifically for that announcement
- Research the institution or organization before writing the letter (mission, department webpage, current events)
- Make sure the document is error free
- Have multiple friends or colleagues proofread the document
- Be positive-say nothing negative
- Make sure to address every qualification that is listed as “required” for the position
- Don’t use jargon or acronyms (even commonly used acronyms in your field)

- Avoid the use of bullets in a cover letter

What types of information should I include?

Salutation: Address the letter to a specific individual using his or her correct title (research this if necessary).

First Paragraph: Include the specific position you are applying for (using the title in the job notice) and where you learned of the opening. Explain how you heard of the position. Provide a mini-summary of qualifications that specifically addresses key qualities of the job position.

Second and Third Paragraphs: Explain your interest in the position and department. Provide a detailed overview of your experiences. Highlight your achievements and qualifications. Point out specifically why you are a good fit for the position.

You want to connect items in your background with the specific needs of the department.

Final paragraph: Indicate what you are enclosing in your application materials and offer to provide extra materials or additional information. Thank the committee for its consideration.