

COVER LETTER CRASH COURSE

JOB SEARCH KICKSTART: COVER LETTER CRASH COURSE

How to write a winning cover letter in less than 10 sentences

Let's face it. Cover letters are hard to write. You're writing a letter to a nameless manager in an office somewhere asking them to consider you for a job. What do you say? How do you even begin?

And the truth is...some hiring managers don't even read them. A few give your resume a cursory 10 second glance and and move on. So what's the point? Do you even need to write a cover letter?

The answer is **Absolutely Yes**. If the hiring manager is looking for a cover letter, you will lose out if you don't have one. Plus, it's a great place to sell yourself.

The best cover letters are short, easy to skim and to the point. **Most can easily be written in less than 10 sentences**. It should not be a narrative version of your resume or a complete autobiography of your life.

It's essential to cover the points that will increase your chance of getting that coveted interview. It's also important to customize each cover letter for each application. A generic cover letter will not get you anywhere.

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Here are the 10 sentences (or less) that you need to create a killer cover letter without killing yourself in the process.

Introduction: 1-2 sentences

Introduce yourself by giving a description of what you are doing currently and why you are interested in the job.

Examples:

“I am an account manager with eight years experience in sales and account management in the wacky widget field and I would like to submit my application for the sales manager position at EZ Sales, Inc.”

“As a highly skilled project manager with 10 years of experience, I would like to submit my application for the project manager position with your company. My experience in data analysis and grant proposals would be a great fit for your company.”

Alternately, if you have a connection in the company **AND** if you have their permission to use their name, mention that here - first paragraph right up front. It's not fair, but it's true. Personal connections, i.e., your network, will increase your chance of getting an interview every time.

Examples:

“I'm applying for this position at the suggestion of your program manager, Joe Schmo, who was my supervisor at ABC sales. I am an account manager with eight years experience in sales and account management in the wacky widget field.”

“Suzie Smith, Director of Bean Counting, recommended that I contact you directly about this position. Suzie and I worked together on several projects in brand management and she thought that EZ Money Inc. would be a good fit for my marketing style and experience.”

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Career highlights: 2-3 sentences

Write 2-3 sentences highlighting your career achievements pertinent to the job description. Again, it is essential to customize each letter for each job application. What are the top two assets you have that would make you an excellent candidate for this particular job? How does your education or training fit with the job description? In other words, why should they hire you?

Examples:

“In my current position, I have trained 3 administrative assistants on company policies and procedures. I spearheaded the effort to go digital with online bookkeeping and scheduling which saved our company over \$5000.

“After working for a decade in project management, I have advanced knowledge of XYX software and planning systems and have trained over 30 users in implementation and proficiency. I am known for creating effective training programs that are effective and practical - and a little entertaining.”

If you are transitioning from another field, make sure to include those transferable skills that are relevant to this new job possibility. Change the language - from “teaching math and science” to “developing focused curriculum and training learners on key concepts and skills.”

Use the **Master List of Transferable Skills** in the **Job Search Kickstart** library to help define your transferable skills.

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Company focus: 1-2 sentences

Why do you want to work for this company? Show them that you have done your research and you know what the company does. Why would you choose to work for this company? How do you fit into their culture? What impresses you about the company? Impress them with your knowledge and initiative (but just with one or two sentences)

Example:

“I have always been impressed by ABC company’s cutting edge technology and vision. My software expertise and training experience would be a great asset for the new series of training and development programs. “

Conclusion: 1-2 sentences

Polish off your cover letter by expressing your interest in a job interview. Remember to thank the employer for their consideration.

Example:

“Please consider my resume and let me know if you would like to schedule a phone call or an interview for the management position. Thanks so much for your time.”

“Thank you for your consideration and time. I look forward to hearing from you.”

Additional Sentences if Needed: 1-2 Sentences

You can add a sentence or two if needed to elaborate on a particular skill or achievement relevant to the job description. Or add a one or two sentence story about why you love the company. But keep it short and break it up into 2-3 sentence paragraphs. Managers like to skim cover letters and it’s easier to keep their attention with short paragraphs (no more than 5 paragraphs total).

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Tips to Keep in Mind:

- Cover letters should **never** be more than one page in length.
- Keep your cover letter conversational and packed with information.
- Highlight your career achievements that align with the job description.
- Use an easy to read font that matches your resume.

Proofread carefully for typos or grammatical errors. A cover letter filled with typos is worse than no cover letter at all. It can be very helpful to read your letter aloud both for style and to check for typos or other problems.

If you feel uncertain of your proofreading skill, ask a friend with great grammatical chops to read through your letter for errors.

And boom. You're done.

You have a customized cover letter that will help you land that interview.

Last VIP: Very Important Point

You will need to write a custom cover letter for EACH job application you complete.

Don't forget to customize your resume as well. It's a pain, I know, but well worth the effort for landing that important job interview.

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